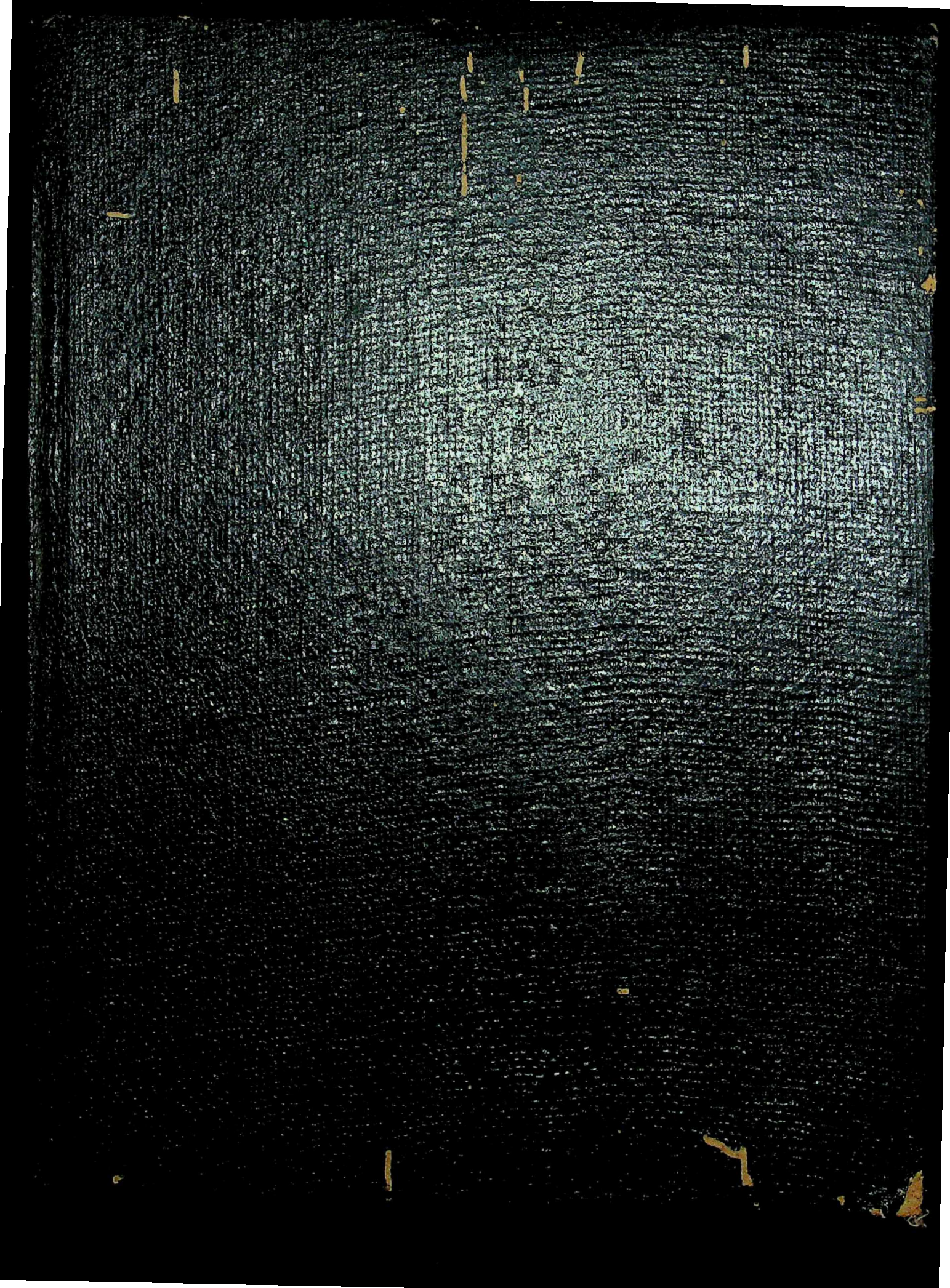

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INDIA TODAY
MAY 15, 1983
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Wireless message sent three days before the Nellie massacre

WT MESSAGE OU (6)

TO: CO 5TH AP

INFO: O/C J ROAD PS/SDPO(M)

FROM: O/C NWG PS(.) DT. 15.2.83

INFORMATION RECEIVED THAT L/NIGHT ABOUT ONE THOUSAND ASSAMESE OF SURROUNDING VILLAGES OF NELLIE WITH DEADLY WEAPONS ASSEMBLED AT NELLIE BY BEATING OF DRUMS(.) MINORITY PEOPLES ARE IN PANIC AND APPREHENDING ATTACK AT ANY MOMENT(.) SUBMISSION FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO MAINTAIN PEACE(.)

STARTLING EVIDENCE

ASSAM ELECTIONS

THE AVOIDABLE TRAGEDY

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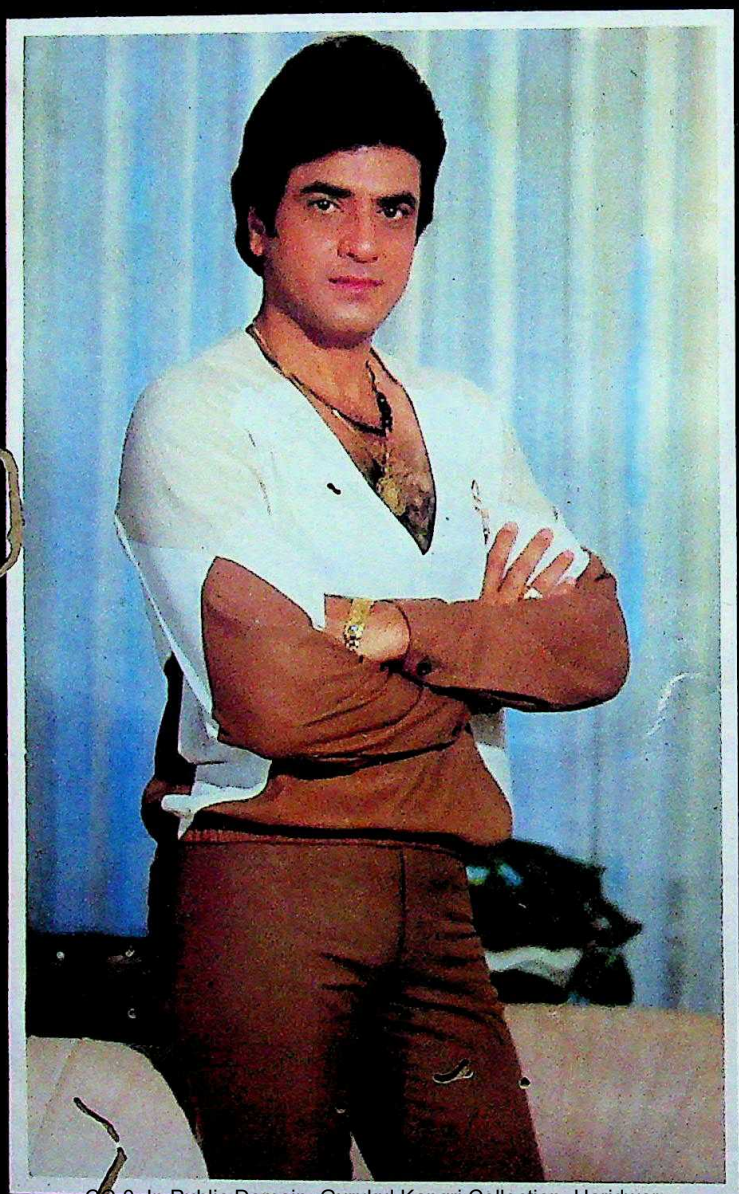

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IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

Assam Elections

The terrible massacres which attended the elections in Assam in February will go down as the worst holocaust in India since the 1947 partition of the country. What is not known is the role of an administration which pursued the task of holding the elections at any cost, turning a blind eye to myriad warnings that violence was in the offing. Magsaysay Award-winning journalist Arun Shourie spent weeks in Assam investigating the elections. His startling findings.

Cover Story • Page 54

Amethi

The continuing Gandhi vs Gandhi serial took a dramatic turn last fortnight with the introduction of a new member to the star-studded cast; namely, Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born wife of leading player, Rajiv Gandhi. Her debut, in the barren locale of Amethi last fortnight, indicated that the ruling party was intending to counter the Maneka threat with another starlet.

Current Events • Page 22

Indian Companies

Activated by the Government's revised policy on non-resident investment, a leading Indian businessman based abroad hungrily devoured shares in major Indian companies, including corporate giants Escorts and DCM, to a point where traditional control was threatened. An in-depth report accompanied by exclusive comments from the corporate raider Britain-based businessman Swraj Paul.

Special Report • Page 92

Rajasthan

The Government's stubborn denials of starvation deaths in Rajasthan are not borne out by the facts. Five consecutive years of drought and the remoteness of many villages have taken a dangerous toll in the past three months, as INDIA TODAY's investigations reveal.

Special Feature • Page 132

Punjab

With the brutal murder of a senior and respected police officer outside the Golden Temple in Amritsar last fortnight, the already delicate situation in the troubled state of Punjab has taken a sudden and alarming turn for the worse.

Current Events • Page 19

Aviation

Nine years and innumerable committees after the proposal was first mooted, the Indian Government last fortnight seemed finally on the brink of deciding on the purchase of a light transport aircraft (LTA). But judging by its tortuous history and new twists in the plot, the LTA decision could still be a tricky one.

Aviation • Page 136

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TODAY

THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

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FOR THE FORTNIGHT MAY 1-15, 1983

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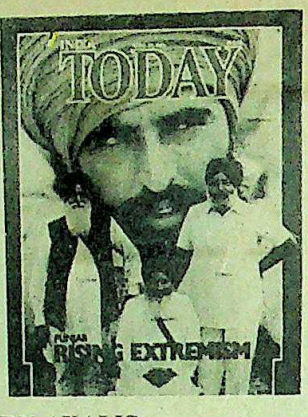


ANGRY AKALIS

The extreme to which the Akalis have taken their movement ("Rising Extremism", April 30) would make one believe that anything can be done in the name of religion. Instead of holding talks and negotiations, the Centre ought to take a firm stand and end the movement once and for all.

New Delhi *Subir Vyas*

■ When the parties concerned stick to diametrically opposed poles and refuse to budge an inch from their stand, a solution, however small, is a dream. Had the Government taken a firm stand in the beginning, the situation in Punjab would not have been so messy and complicated.

Karnataka *Dr G.N. Sharma*

■ The situation in Punjab is another example of a political power struggle going too far. The movement which had been launched to highlight the persecution of Sikhs and other problems is now taking the shape of a communal whiplash, with religious fervours being ignited by the extremist leaders to seek their ulterior motives.

Delhi *Rajiv Handa*

■ It is time the Centre solved the pending issues like the status of Chandigarh and the sharing of the Punjab waters. I agree that the Akali leaders should not have mixed religion with politics.

Trichy *R.V. Venkatraman*

■ Why put the entire blame for the bloodshed on the extremists? The Akalis are always fighting for more power. They are now dreaming of making Punjab their 'Holy Land'. But Punjab is not the land of the Akalis alone; the Hindus have made considerable contributions to the development of the state and that must never be overlooked or forgotten.

Jammu *Ashok Kumar*

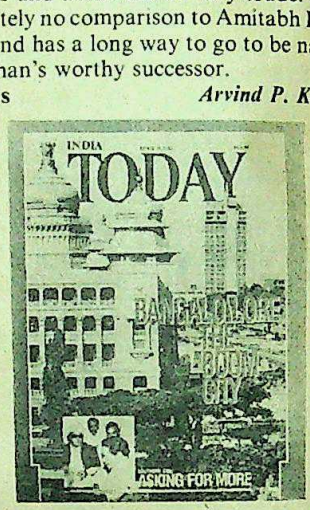
■ The recent events in Punjab have tarnished the image of a great state. By arousing the passions of the masses, certain religious-cum-political activists may gain some short-term gains, but they cannot possibly remedy the numerous maladies inflicting the state. Those spearheading the agitation must change their adamant attitude so that a workable solution may be found. The need of the hour is to defuse the tension in the state by resuming talks between the Akalis and the Centre.

New Delhi *Alok Shrivastava*

UNTOUCHABLE AMITABH

Your correspondent's review of *Andhaa Kaanoon* (April 30) is unbalanced and tilted to project Rajnikant, whose mannerisms and antics are all very crude. He is absolutely no comparison to Amitabh Bachchan and has a long way to go to be named Bachchan's worthy successor.

Madras *Arvind P. Kumar*



DOOMED BOOM

Your cover story "Bangalore—The Boom City" (April 15) should have read "Bangalore—The Doomed City". With its severe water, power and housing shortages not to mention the high cost of living, Bangalore will in less than 10 years become a doomed city, unless something is done about it. The city is fast losing its 'old world charm' and to coincide with the cover story, Bangalore is going through the worst heat wave in years.

Bangalore *M.C. Pi[illegible]*

■ The statistic-studded cover story is a perfect picture of the urbanisation trends in India and can serve as a forecast to many of the other towns.

Bangalore *Sathya Praka[illegible]*

■ You have very effectively depicted the transformation of the city from a pensioner's paradise to a rich man's paradise for it has really become the resort of film stars and industrialists.

Bangalore *Bhavani Subramani*

■ Like everything else in our country

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boom benefits only the rich and the powerful. You have not mentioned the plight of the poor who make this boom possible. If Bangalore is allowed to develop in the same unjust way as it does now, it will end up another Calcutta with injustice written large across its face.

Bangalore *Dr Thambu Rajan*

■ Your article succeeds in depicting the present boom as also the impending doom. Prosperity in the Indian cities has come to mean that the lower class citizens share apartments at exorbitant rent while the rich continue to acquire acres of land and live in opulence.

Ahmedabad *S.D. Kamat*

■ To make the article sound complete you should have included some information on the Lalbaugh and the Cubbon Park.

Bangalore *Raghavendra Hukeri*

■ In just a few years your magazine will probably carry a cover story titled "Bangalore—The B-o-o-m City", if its present rate of growth is not controlled.

Hyderabad *Hari S. Pai*

■ In the story "Bangalore—The Boom City", on page 54 the name of E. Kumar was inadvertently changed to Kumar Narayan. The photograph, too is not of Mr E. Kumar. The error is regretted. *Editor*

STATE VS CENTRE

The article "Federalism To The Fore" (April 15) was well covered. And one does not hesitate in admiring the bold step taken by Ramakrishna Hegde. The Southern Council is indeed beneficial in giving a new dimension to the efficiency of the federal units.

It is disheartening on the part of the Kerala chief minister to see the whole affair with a myopic eye, he ought to have acted more like a statesman than a mere puppet.

Jammu *S.S. Sambyal*

■ In all fairness, it must be said that the forum of southern states (proposed to be repeated periodically) does accomplish, or strive towards the accomplishment of objectives working towards the general good. This meeting does herald closer relations and enhance cooperation among the concerned states.

However, the southern chief ministers have failed to realise that the ill will their seemingly innocuous meeting can generate will in all probability outweigh the benefits. This is because the recently formed group is exclusive, and the act of physical exclusion borders on ideological secessionism. This is dangerous, because, it is, in fact, a defiance of the Centre, all the more dangerous because it is a collective defiance.

Bangalore *N. Deepak*

■ Despite some minor differences, the southern states have much in common and the demands made by them have a sort of uniformity. But given the diverse nature of the regional aspirations if similar fronts crop up and make demands widely varying from one another, this will only substantiate the Centre's allegation that such moves are detrimental to national integration. Then the whole idea may meet with a premature end.

Calcutta *Pinaki Chakraborty*

■ There was unjustifiable and sharp criticism of the formation of the council of the southern chief ministers, the primary objectives of which are of settling the outstanding inter-state problems with cooperative effort and also for a fresh look at the Centre-state relations in order to make them healthier. For this purpose the Centre has to adopt a more accommodative attitude towards the states which are not under the Congress(I) rule. All developments will have to be viewed in a broader perspective.

Faridabad *Geetha Balasubramaniam*

DEAD RITE

The photographs and the article "Varanasi—The Burning Issue" (April 15) truly depicts the sordid saga of the most sacred place.

Hazaribagh *Arun Kumar Mishra*

■ Installation of an electric crematorium at Manikarnika Ghat is most welcome. It will save wood and thus stop deforestation. The Government should also take legal action against Dom Raja, who for his own interest exploits the orthodox people in the name of religion.

Jamshedpur *S. Shill*

■ The correspondent has overlooked the real issue of pollution and its cause at Varanasi. The Swatch Ganga Campaign is aimed at focussing public attention on the issue of the river pollution through domestic and industrial sewage. Over 70 per cent of the river's pollution is due to the discharge of the raw domestic and industrial sewage. In fact the pollution from the burning ghats is insignificant.

The story projects Dom Raja as a monarch. He has proprietary rights over the ghats and all Hindus pay him not because of his rights but because of the age-old religious customs. If the people decide to go in for an electric crematorium no one can stop them.

Varanasi *Dr S.N. Upadhyay*
Executive director, Swatch Ganga Campaign, Sankat Mochan Foundation

LEFT BEHIND

Your correspondent's assumption in his report "Filling A Vacuum" (April 15) that one of the reasons for the defeat of Dr Ashok Mitra, former West Bengal finance minister of the Left Front Government, in 1982 is the damage he has caused to the Sanchaita Chit Fund seems incorrect. In fact he had polled 5.48 per cent more of the total votes cast in '82 than in '77. Another factor that appears to be responsible for the defeat is that a large number of south Indians who had seldom exercised their franchise in the past elections cast their votes obviously for the Congress(I) candidate in '82. Had the Bengali voters, even those who had invested in the Sanchaita Chit Fund, not voted for Dr Mitra he would have lost by a much bigger margin.

24 Parganas *S.C. Das Bakshi*

■ It is true that many of the Left Front candidates including Dr Mitra lost in the 1982 polls from the very constituency they had won from in the 1977 polls. But the reason is not the decrease of support for the candidate or the Left Front as suspected by your correspondent. It can be said that many of the seats the Left Front lost in '82 had been won by it in '77 merely due to the division of the anti-Left Front votes between the Janata and the Congress. During the '82 polls the Janata Party had been reduced to a nonentity, hence all the voters found the Congress(I) to be the best anti-Left Front alternative.

Calcutta *Nirendra Nagar*

■ The article on Dr Mitra is not fair and objective. It shows a bias for the doctor. His oft repeated statements against the Centre were indicative of not so much policy matters as the doctor's own prejudices possibly the result of the unfulfilment of his own ambitions. It will indeed be a tragedy for the country and for West Bengal if Jyoti Basu allows him to spoil the relations between the state and the Centre.

Calcutta *Prem S. Mehrish*

STRONG FAITH

Though appealing to compassion, Geetanjali in her poems ("Profile In Courage", April 15) depicts a courageous reconciliation to the unalterable lot which fate had in store for her. Her faith in God, quiet suffering, and mental maturity are so rare even among adults in such circumstances.

Calcutta *Uma Chanda*

RIGHT PLACING

Maneka is sure to get a good deal of encouragement for she has kept unemployment and corruption ("A Coming Out Party", April 15) on top of action in the

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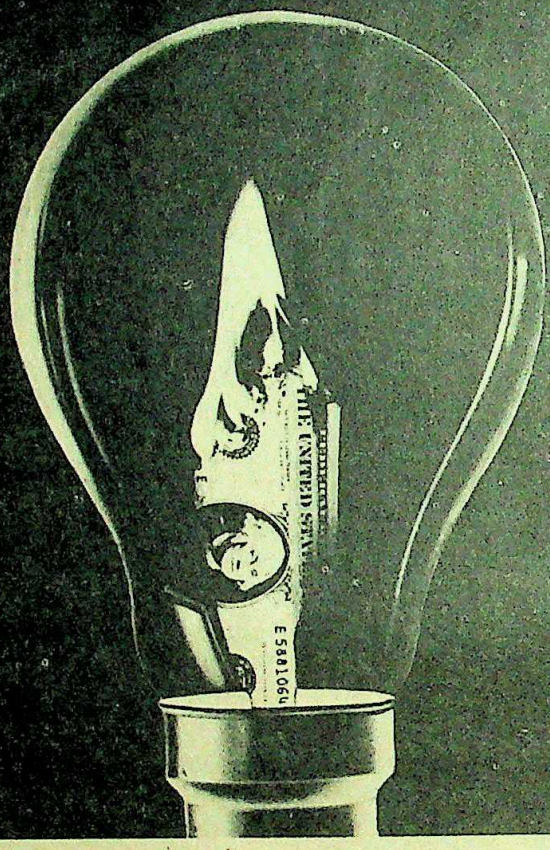
India used up Rs. 200 million in foreign exchange on lamp shells in 1981

Since 1982, it is a different story



Elektron's new 30 million shells-a-year plant at Ranipet, Tamilnadu, to slash imports by 100%

Till now, the Indian lighting industry has been largely dependent on imported components, especially lamp shells.

Elektron is the first company to set up a lamp shell unit in Tamilnadu for lamps and fluorescent tubes.

Not only will this unit feed Elektron's own lamp factories, it will also produce enough to supply other lamp units — especially small-scale industries — and reduce their crippling dependence on imports: chalking up another first to Elektron's long list of pioneering activities.

Elektron. It will be worth watching closely in the future.

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manifesto of her party, Rashtriya Sanjay Manch.

Jai Singh Bika
New Delhi

DEBATABLE ISSUE

Apropos the article "Mixed Blessing" (April 15) it is debatable whether the absorption of a section of skilled and unskilled labour force from India in the Gulf countries has been a boom or a bane for the country. True, financially it has been a blessing to the emigrant workers and their dependents as well as to the Indian Government reaping a harvest in foreign exchange. But for the remaining population of India it has been a matter of concern. Their returning to the country with plenty of money and paying higher rentals and prices for the houses has caused the hike all over the country.

J.R. Samy
Bombay

CAMPUS INDISCIPLINE

Under the prevailing situations the Government's interference in matters of the campus discipline ("Chaos On Campus", April 15) will not only make the situation more difficult but will also have an impact on other campuses. This is bound to increase the confidence of anti-social elements. If the Government is serious in bringing discipline it should set up enquiry committees for finding out the reasons for the indiscipline and faithfully implement the recommendations of these committees.

P. Das
Varanasi

TOURIST ATTRACTION

The stadia which are lying empty ("Costly Legacy", April 15) would resound with cries if they are opened to the tourists. The traditional visiting places are getting more and more crowded and the opening of these stadia to the tourists would ease the pressure. A small admission fee could be charged thereby meeting a part of the colossal maintenance expenditure.

J. Singh
New Delhi

DANGEROUS DECISION

The Government's decision to comb the electoral rolls and detect "outsiders" in Jammu & Kashmir ("Subjects Of Dispute", April 15) is a very bad precedent and will lead to unsavoury results not only in the state but also in other parts of the country. The right of Indians, Hindu and Muslim, to settle down anywhere is a natural right and cannot be curbed.

While curbs on infiltration from Pakistan are justified, restraints on movements of Indians into Jammu & Kashmir is a grave error and will jeopardise inter-state relations.

K. Wadhwa
New Delhi

NAM COVERAGE

I was quite impressed with your article on the Non-aligned Movement (March 31). However, much more than what you had published was expected since the conference took place in your country. The biggest disappointment was, however, that you did not even carry a wide-angle picture of all the heads of state and governments.

Mohsin Ladak
California, USA

REAL BREAKTHROUGH

It is not quite right to claim that the "breakthrough" in leprosy vaccine ("Germs Of Controversy", March 31) was made by Indian scientists. The real breakthrough is due to the work of Waldemar F. Kirchheimer and Eleanor E. Storr in USA, who discovered that the nine-banded armadillo could be systematically infected with human leprosy bacillus, and of Philip Draper in England, who devised a practical and efficient method for purifying the bacilli from armadillo tissues. Using these methods, Richard Rees and his team at National Institute of Medical Research, London, developed the vaccine. The Wellcome Foundation Ltd in England has started manufacturing the vaccine for clinical trials, which will be carried out initially in Britain, Norway and US, under the aegis of the WHO. Thus, the vaccine is not yet ready for use.

T.S. Raman
New Delhi

UNFAIR USAGE

The special report on Assam (March 31) is quite fair except at one place. The use of the word 'sharpen' in the sentence—"The RSS is helping sharpen the ethnic divisions that have now permanently damaged the Assamese social structure"—conveys just the opposite of what the RSS is trying to do. The proper word is 'soften'.

The report also mentions Joynath Sarma as a prominent RSS member. This is not correct.

K.S. Sudarshan
Calcutta

■ To compare the carnage in Assam to the massacre in Shatila and Sabra, in Lebanon, is unfair.

A common man would agree, but there is a vast difference. For one thing, in Lebanon, the massacre was carried out by the Falangists i.e. Christians, who are genuine residents of Lebanon, as an act of revenge for atrocities committed by the Palestinians. For another, Israeli troops neither participated nor helped the massacre in Lebanon, which was ruled by the Lebanon Government. The struggle between two sections of Lebanon was their internal affair.

But the Assamese were killed mostly by bullets fired by the armed forces brought into Assam by the Government of India.

A.B. Kelkar
Bombay

■ I wonder if your readers have observed that the East Pakistan-Bangladesh history of 1970–71 is being repeated in Assam. Yahya Khan and Tikka Khan cracked down on the poor East Bengalis when, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, they started a popular movement on the issue of greater autonomy for East Pakistan. To quell the mass uprising, the Pakistan Government killed thousands of its own subjects. Hundreds of thousands of Bengalis fled their country

The Government of Assam and the Government of India, in the same manner, are resorting to military and paramilitary operations against their subjects in Assam to crush the popular movement which dared the Government to expel foreigners from the Indian soil and to delete their names from the voters' list. Hundreds of Indian citizens are being wantonly killed by the forces with utter vindictiveness. In addition, the more diplomatic Indian Government is using foreigners to annihilate its own subjects. The difference is that while the victims of Pakistani crack-down took refuge in India, the victims of Indian brutality have nowhere to go.

J. Bhaduri
Gauhati

■ The report about the Purbanchal Bank Ltd in your special report on Assam (March 31) is incorrect. As an agent of the bank, I have received a maximum number of accounts and deposits, and have been cordially received in the community. My personal belief is that the people of this locality are above any communal feeling.

Tarun Dutta
Gauhati

The purpose of the reference was to show the problems being created in the area by the recent difficulties in Assam, not to judge Mr Dutta's performance. CHAITANYA KALBAG *met Mr Dutta and recalls that when the people present put forward the view that the bank was not having an easy time in getting accounts.*

—Editor

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Dunlop India

A Climate of Confidence

Dunlop has been a part of India's life for 86 years, ever since 1898 when the Company set up a small office to sell India's first pneumatic tyres. Today, Dunlop plays a vital role in many core activities. Such as transportation, industry, agriculture, mining, power generation, Defence and exports.

Dunlop's involvement in India's life became even closer on 24 November 1982 with an issue to the Indian public of 400,000 13.5% Secured Convertible Debentures of Rs 300 each. The public issue was oversubscribed 2.15 times.

Dunlop designated 1982 as the "Year of Productivity". Here is a Progress Report :

Production increased : sales reached Rs 340 crores

1982 was a year of recession worldwide. In India, there was a slackening of road transport activities; power shortages continued and costs of coal and electricity increased substantially

Against this backdrop, something remarkable happened at Dunlop India.

Production of tyres and industrial products (conveyor belting, PVC belting, hoses) increased. And despite a reduction in selling price of a number of major products during the second half of the year, sales went up by 19% to reach Rs 340 crores. Against stiff competition.

Best selling products : customers prefer Dunlop

This is proof indeed, if any was needed, that Dunlop products enjoy the highest customer preference. They have become best sellers only because they give the consumer the best value for money. In terms of technology, quality and service.

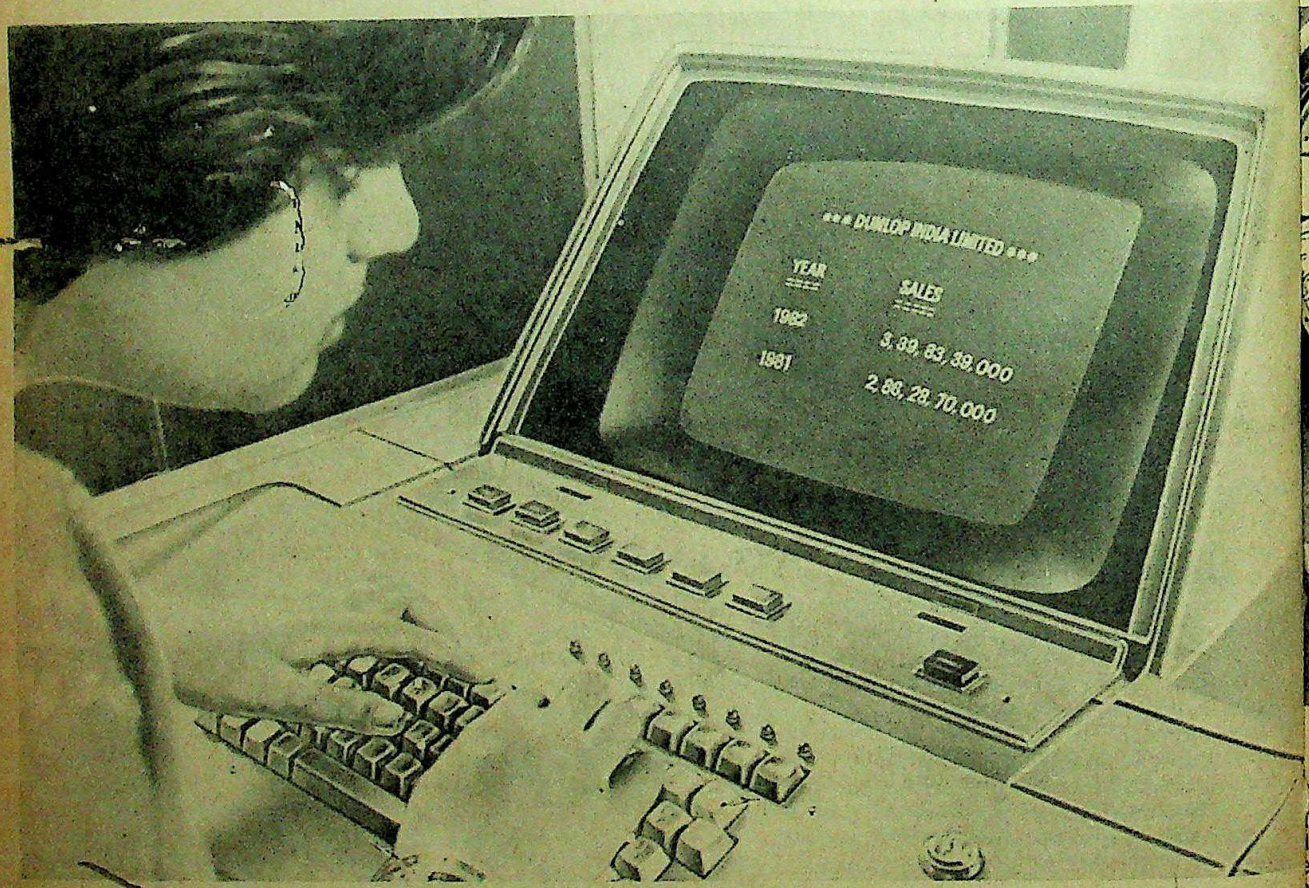
In a year when monetary constraints slowed down purchasing programmes in a number of key sectors, Dunlop was in demand. For its all-nylon Starflex conveyor belting. For its market leading braided hose. For its best selling nylon truck tyres.

Increased export earnings

Continued economic recession in the world market, specially in the USA, had an adverse effect on Dunlop's automotive tyre exports. Despite these unfavourable conditions, Dunlop was able to achieve exports of Rs 8.8 crores, 18% more than the previous year. This was made possible by increases in third party exports and Dunlop Industrial Products. As a result, the Company was able to qualify for eligibility as an Export House.

Phase I — Rs 30 crore modernisation and expansion completed

The 1982 capital expenditure of Rs 8.32 crores was the highest Dunlop India has made in recent times. But



Dunlop Computer Centre, Sahaganj

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eep pace with the increasing demanis of rapid industrialisation, Dunlop as recognised the need to further moernise and diversify. And has put into peration another major development rogramme. Aimed at introducing high-echnology products and cost efficient rocesses. Modern presses for heavy uty truck tyres have been installed quipment for the manufacture of conyor belting, fan and vee belts has been modernised. And a new aero tyre nit has been set up at Ambattur.

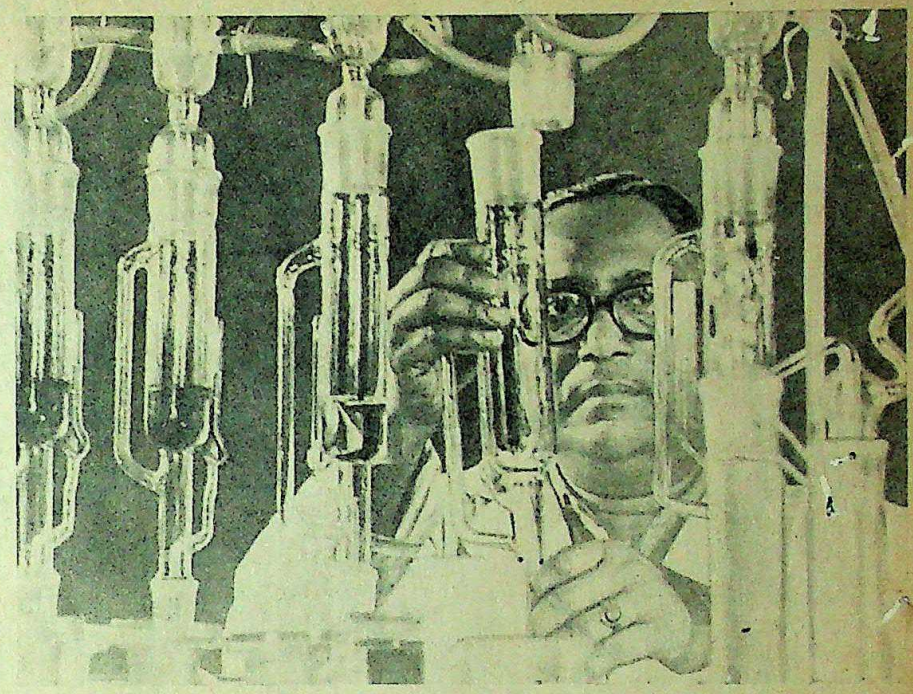
New products soon to appear

he results will be visible soon. In tyres or the new generation vehicles that will soon appear on Indian roads. Tyres or the new MIRAGE fighters. Imroved truck tyres to carry heavier oads over longer distances. Improved onveyor belting. New high-pressure ndustrial hoses. And ultra-large offhe-road tyres.

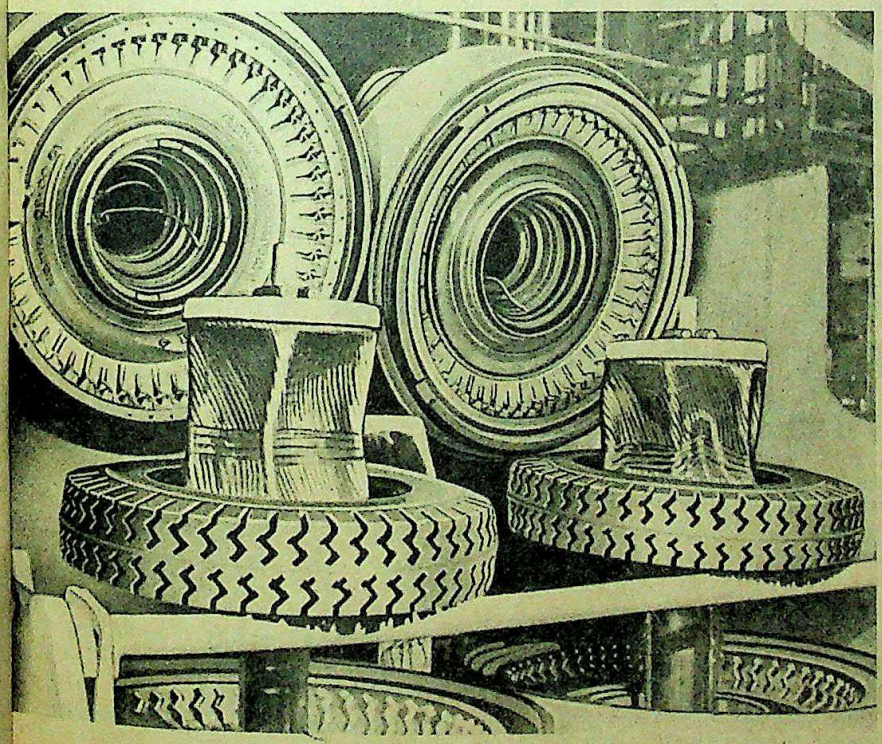
Largest ever investment in R&D

unlop is among India's biggest inestors in R&D, and has one of the inest tyre and industrial product laboatories in this part of the world.

Already improvements have been



A continuous quest for better products at the Dunlop R&D Centre



Modern Bag-O-Matic presses for heavy-duty truck tyres

rried out in tyre tread patterns and in and heat resistant conveyor belting esigns. Already new formulations ve been developed for Dunlop's industrial adhesives. Already more efficient anti-vibration devices for Defence and industrial needs are in the making.

New products; new processes: a new confidence

All these new products, new processes and new technologies will help Dunlop to move closer to the customer and contribute more to India's growth sectors. Such as transportation, coal, steel, power generation, agriculture and Defence.

For Dunlop India, there is developing a climate of confidence.

Dunlop Moves Ahead

A tyre without petro-chemicals

Dunlop R&D scientists are paying special attention to waste recycling and to reducing dependence on petroleum-based raw materials. A significant 1982 achievement is Dunlop's new bicycle tyre in which silica recovered from rice husk and chemicals isolated from botanical sources have been substituted for petro-based raw materials.

DUNLOP INDIA

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State Bank Recurring Deposit Scheme. Little by little your savings grow bigger and bigger.

State Bank
Security is a warm feeling

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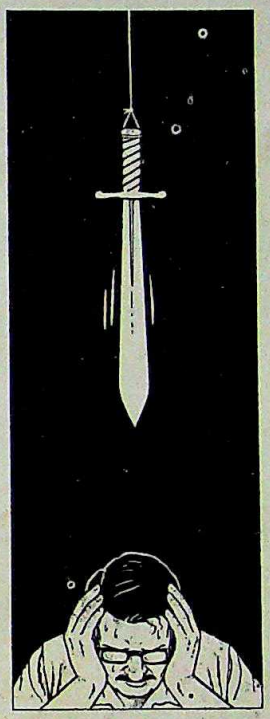
INDIA TODAY

ADMINISTRATION

Keeping Everyone Insecure



INSECURITY and to some extent fear have become part of India's life blood. Certain types of insecurities are inherent in the process of development. But the insecurity that has been institutionalised in India in the last two decades is of a different kind: it is corrosive to the already enervated pillars of our democratic political system.

The prime minister's political style keeps her ministerial colleagues at the Centre as well as chief ministers and their colleagues in most of the states uncertain of their political longevity. Since 1980 Mrs Gandhi has reshuffled her Cabinet 29 times and changed chief ministers nine times and they in turn have changed their ministers innumerable times. Politicians insecure in their berths are prone to make hay while the sun shines, for the sun shines but briefly and the hay is far from aplenty. Politicians, in their turn, take it out on the bureaucracy. Wholesale transfers of administrative personnel keep civil servants constantly in a state of nervous tension. In January last, B.K. Nehru, governor of Jammu and Kashmir, conceded that "the functions of the administration have been usurped by the politicians". The halting effect on development due to the destabilisation of the bureaucracy is apparent and so is the palpable sense of insecurity pervading its ranks. Now even the judiciary is not safe. The Centre has fired the first shot by deciding that the chief justice of each high court must be an "outsider". Large-scale transfers of high court judges seem to be in the offing. The judges themselves have been contributing to their own insecurity and status decline by "visible and vocal" differences amongst themselves, to quote the legal reforms committee.

Economic insecurities are fast undermining the strength and capabilities of the entire administrative structure. Even those who at the top of the heap and must necessarily bear the burden of running the administration, find their financial position getting progressively weaker. The most a civil servant can be paid is around Rs 4,000 a month, hardly enough to secure his peace of mind. People down the line earn even less. The danger of this on the working of the entire system was pointed out as far back as 1968 by a study team headed by the late C.D. Deshmukh. Over the years the country's employment policy has created a massive army of underpaid unproductive officialdom wallowing in the Kafkaesque environment of what goes by the name of government offices—15.5 million of them with 3.7 million at the Centre. Not surprisingly the politicians and the bureaucracy are in a silent conspiracy of mutual benefit to continually increase this to expand their empire of patronage. There is an urgent need to break this vicious cycle and to critically evaluate with a managerial approach the functions performed by these millions. Government employees should be well paid as long as their tasks are well defined and some evaluation of performance is undertaken.

This vast seething concourse of unproductive humanity eats up 53 per cent of the annual revenues of the Centre and 56 per cent of the states'. The Government has obviously made itself the employer of the last resort. In pitiable contrast, only 2.4 million jobs have been created in organised private industry in the last 10 years. The massive failure to create productive jobs has not only reduced the pace of development to a sickly crawl, it has generated pressures and incentives for corruption, that erode the morale of the bureaucracy.

The bureaucratic pyramid is now a sad picture of distortions, breathing psychological insecurity into the entire system. The topmost civil servant is as incapable of making both ends meet as is the lowliest clerk. Financial insecurity makes the highly placed bureaucrat flaunt his power and status to compensate for his monetary weakness in comparison with the urban and rural new rich.

The judiciary's position is even worse. High court judgeship no longer attracts the best legal talent. In January last 172 of the 416 judgeships were vacant. At the same time, 48,000 cases were pending at the Supreme Court, 14,000 of them for ten years, while in the district and subordinate courts the number of pending cases were 10 million. The lower judiciary is so ill paid and overworked that it has ceased to be an attraction even for mediocre talents, while the clerical staff in the courts remain, as ever, rabid nests of bribery and corruption.

The end result is a self-perpetuating and self-serving system which has spawned a black economy of gigantic proportions. The financial demands emanating from insecure politicians who set the example for poorly paid bureaucrats and a crippling tax structure have combined to reinforce corruption at all levels. The black economy has become such an integral, even if wholly illicit, part of the system that an amputation would kill not the disease but the whole.

The cure of such a malady is a tall order. But certain things are imperative. The remedy must start at the top. The country's top jobs must be held by people who measure up to them, can take responsibility and decisions without fear or insecurity. They, in turn, will set the example for their subordinates. None of this will make a dent on economic insecurity if there isn't a genuine freeze on low-paid bureaucratic jobs which are a bottomless pit for scarce government funds. The alternative to such action will be for the regime to keep falling victim to the only relevant insecurity that must be encouraged: that of the electorate's mood which must serve to keep the Government of the day on its toes.

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PANDANA/PM/E-13

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» A saint should rule the state.
—*Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao in* Indian Express, *after his decisio to wear saffro*

» If I get any opportunity, I don't mind acting in movies.
—*Former Karnataka chief minister R. Gundu Rao quoted in* Socie

» (Robert) Clive's plunder begins to look fairly respectable compared with th loot of the public exchequer by politicians and favourites in recent years.
—*Nayantara Sahgal in* The Statesma

» We have too many socialists in the country.
—*Bharatiya Janata Party President A.B. Vajpayee interviewed in* The Wee

» I have myself wasted 21 years in Parliament. What have I been able to do?
—*Janata Party President Chandra Shekhar in* The Sunday Observe

» Our government is determined to control the knife-and-dagger culture which wa receiving political patronage earlier.
—*Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde quoted in* The Times Of Indi

» Mohandas Karamchand can't be a big name in the world of acting. Although he had on a pretty good make-up to look like Ben Kingsley, he had none of Ben's grand gestures, nor his fine diction and powerful voice.
—*Rajinder Puri in* The Telegraph

» Like the captain of a ship, (the chairman) must have good judgement so that if the ship is sinking he should be able to say so five minutes ahead of time.
—*Prakash Tandon on a board chairman's job in* Business Worl

» If the audience wants trash, we will give trash.... How can we write only wha we like?
—*Film lyricist Anand Bakshi interviewed in* Onlooke

» What is dispiriting is the ease with which favourable views about literary an artistic creations are replaced by wholly unfavourable ones when there is a persona quarrel.
—*Nissim Ezekiel in* Gentlem

» When I feel sad I like to get out of my jeans and wear a saree or salwar kamee
—*Film actress Deepti Naval in* Filmfar

» Living in Delhi without bars on your windows is as inconceivable as living in Go without a bar in your house.
—*George Menezes in* Express Magazi

» I think that pain is the final, indeed the only touchstone of life. Pain and loneliness Neither of which can be shared with anyone. To each his own pain and loneliness
—*Punjabi writer Ajeet Cour in* The Hindustan Times Sunday Magazi

» (Mrs Gandhi) looks better and younger now than she did 12 years ago eve though she works very hard.
—*Dr Denton Cooley, heart specialis*

» Dancing is a poor paying proposition. Real art belongs to the poor; they are th ones who understand us.
—*Sachin Shankar in* Bomba

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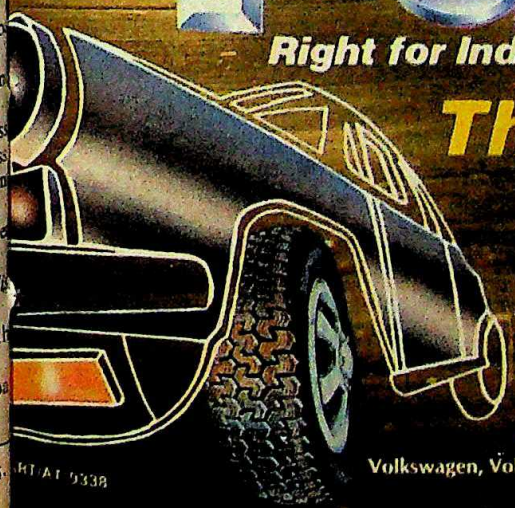

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A RAUNAQ ENTERPRISE

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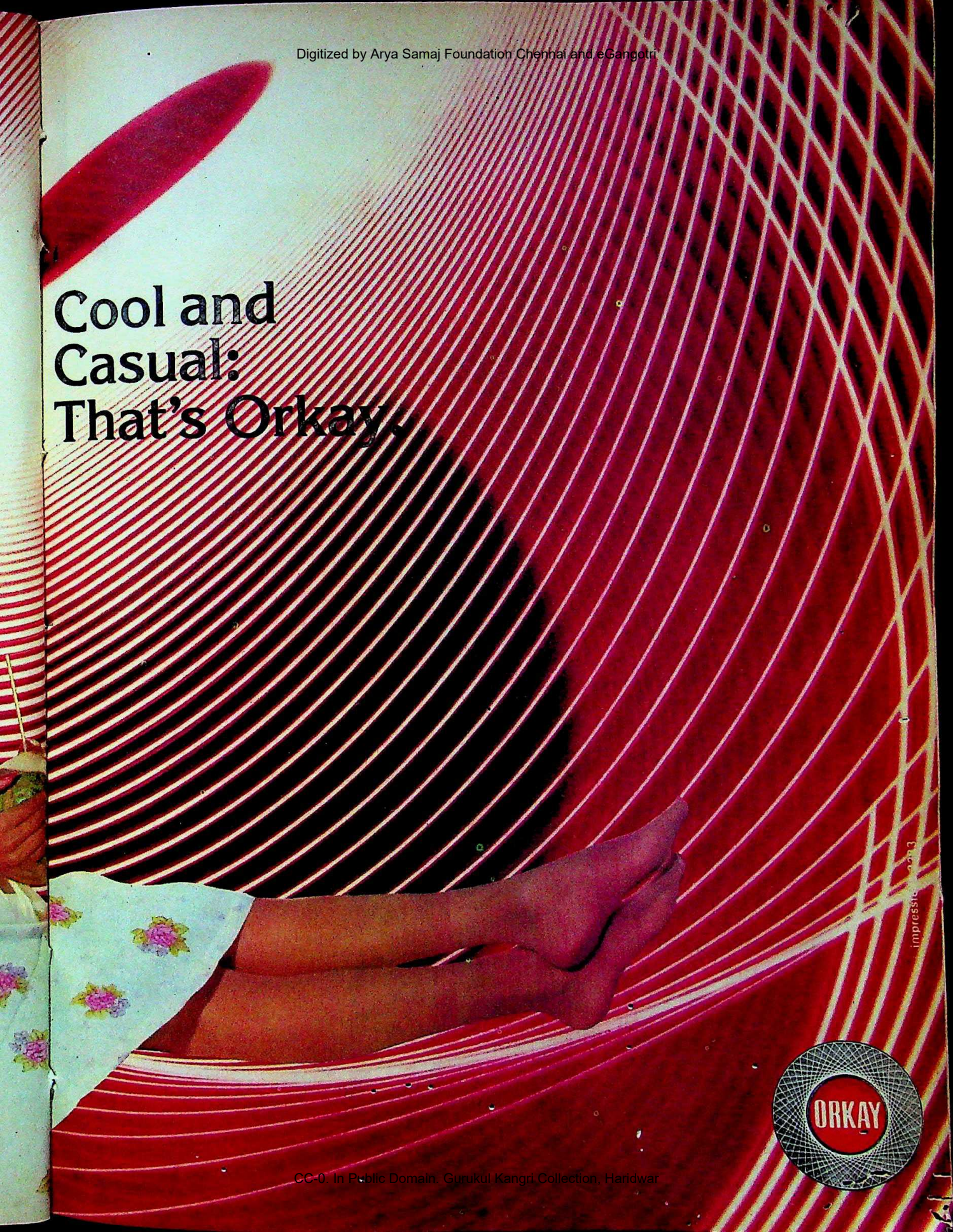

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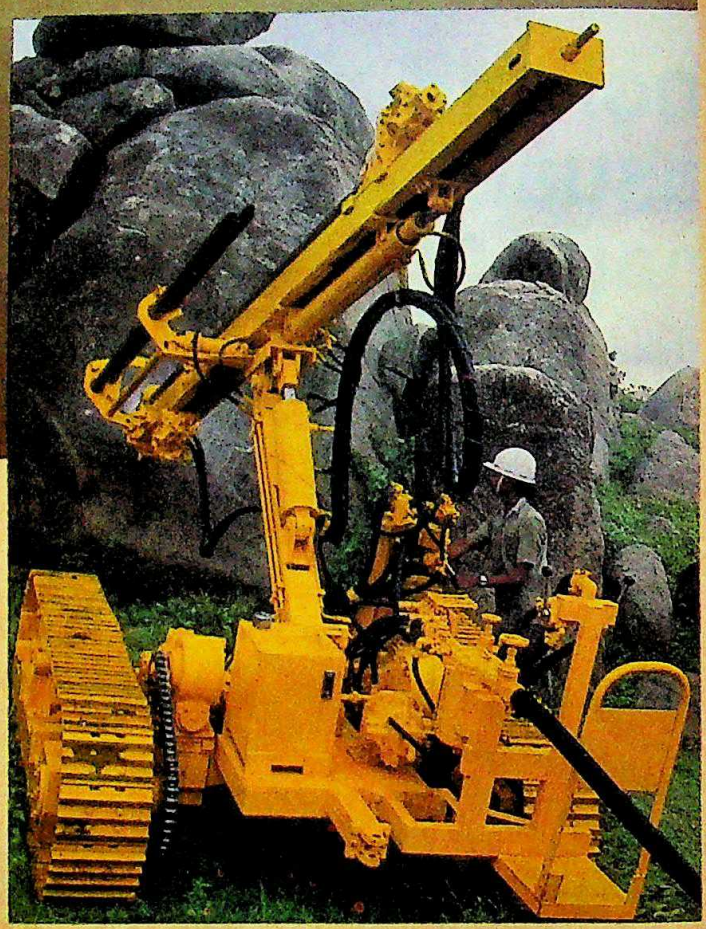

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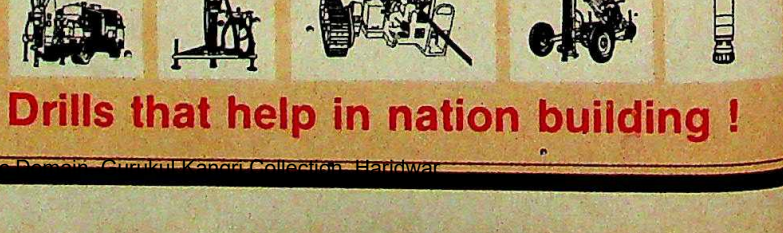

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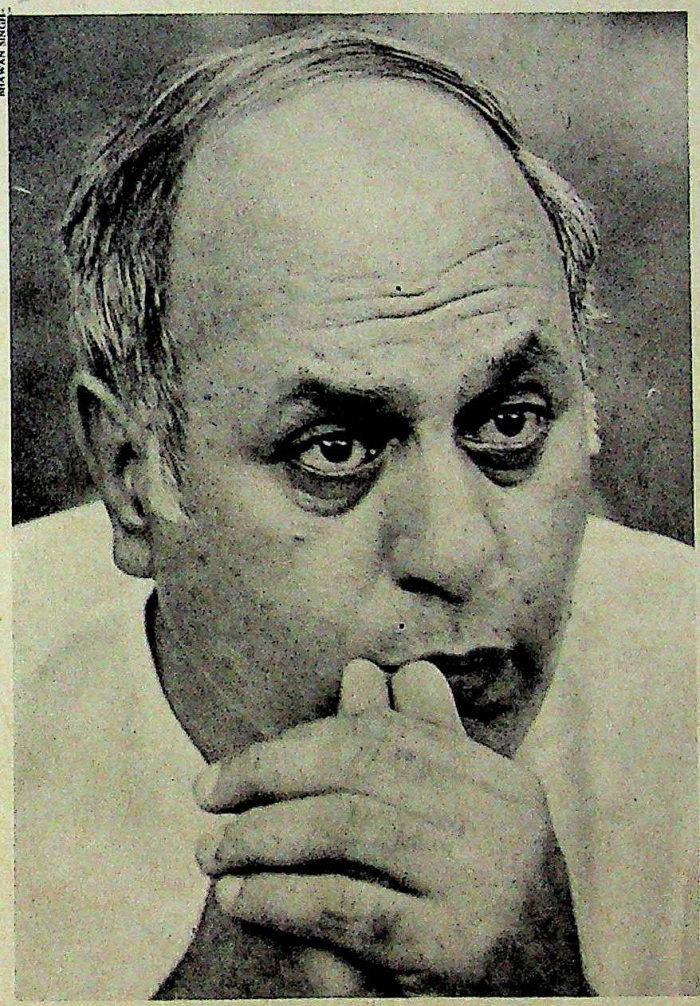
MMU & KASHMIR

rial Of Strength

IF RHETORIC alone could win elections then both the National Conference (NC) and the Congress(I) would appear to be set to share the honours in the June elections for two Lok Sabha seats d the 76-member state Legislative Assem- y. From the day elections re announced the real issues, e clean administration and eats to the sensitive state's curity, have been blotted out a welter of charges and coun- -charges. If that was not bad ough, Chief Minister Farooq dullah has confused matters rther by blowing hot and owing cold, at one moment ngling promises of an electo- alliance with the Congress(I) d practically in the same eath launching into a tirade ainst it for "25 years of misru- at the Centre".

Most of the volley of words s obviously intended prima- for consumption within the te. In New Delhi, Farooq got gether over dinner with Rajiv ndhi as the two attempted to tch together an electoral un- rstanding. But in the state the ef minister did not neglect a gle opportunity to lambast Congress(I) and the Central vernment. He even went to extent of warning that if the ctorate did not renew the 's mandate the people would ve to face a spell of Cong- s(I) misrule and the state ight have to face an Assam- e situation which nobody l be able to control".

Harsh Rhetoric: Farooq s equally harsh about the ntral Government, constant- returning to the oft-repeated gations that it was unfair to the state. butting Mrs Gandhi's allegation that his vernment had frittered away its resources, flung back the charge at the Centre, using it of spending lavishly on the Asian mes and the Non-aligned meet. In a ngly worded statement the J & K Govern- nt said: "In fact the Central Government lf runs into budgetary deficits of thou- ds of crores of rupees which is made up by deficit financing and foreign borrowing. The Centre had to agree to a series of severe conditions which were imposed by the International Monetary Fund. It, however, conveniently forgot that more than Rs 1,000 crore was spent on the Asian Games, Rs 25 crore on the Non-aligned meet and several crores more on the electricity, just to provide the most modern street lighting in Delhi." Speaking to INDIA TODAY Farooq elaborated the charges further, saying: "I want to develop the state but where are the resources? The Central Government doesn't permit us to build even an international airport in the valley to earn petro-dollars. For each and everything we are dependent on the Centre."



BHAWAN SINGH

Chief Minister Abdullah: the acid test

With Farooq setting the tone of the campaign, Congress(I) leaders were quick to respond in kind. Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (PCC-I) chief Mufti Mohammad Syed was the first to pick up the gauntlet. Soon afterwards All India Congress Committee(I) (AICC-I) General Secretary Rajendra Kumari Bajpai also joined the fray by declaring after visiting the state that "Farooq and his party are responsible for the chaotic conditions in the state." In defence of the Congress(I) she added: "Indiraji has given special attention to Jammu & Kashmir and it was the Central Government's liberal financial assistance which has raised the state's per capita income during the last 20 years."

Bajpai was on firm ground with her figures. A note circulated by the Planning Commission on the eve of the chief ministers' conference held in Delhi last month showed that the Centre was contributing more than 90 per cent of the state's Sixth Five-Year Plan budget of Rs 900 crore—a higher percentage than for any other state. The per capita outlay is Rs 1,949 as against the all-India average of Rs 972. In addition, the per capita Central assistance for the state during the Sixth Plan works out to Rs 2,185.

Little Impact: But the real issues are not the plan allocations but the personality clashes within both organisations and Farooq's inability to make an impact on the state Government. The only point of difference between Farooq and his mother Begum Abdullah, popularly known as 'Madre-Mehrban' (the kind mother), is that she has stood by many bureaucrats whom Farooq would have preferred to sideline. As a result Chief Secretary Noor Mohammad is still in his job and other senior bureaucrats have only been shifted laterally from one important job to another. But Farooq's initial efforts to create an impact by promulgating two ordinances to eliminate corruption and curb communal organisations have largely gone waste.

While Farooq strives to set his own house in order, the Congress(I) is trying to recover lost ground. The party organisation

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is in the hands of hardliners like Mufti Mohammad who are hostile to the NC. The hardliners argue that the Congress(I) will do best to fight it out alone. They pin their hopes on the premise that Farooq does not have the same capacity as his father to sway the 48 lakh voters of the state. Besides this, they argue, the delicate electoral balance will work against the NC, as the other regional parties like the People's Conference, and the Jamaat-e-Islami are well placed to take a slice of the votes in the Kashmir valley. The Congress(I) hopes that this, added to the fact that in Jammu, opposition parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Lok Dal, the Janata Party and the Jammu-based Panther's Party may be able to successfully capitalise on the disparities between Jammu and the valley may weaken the NC.

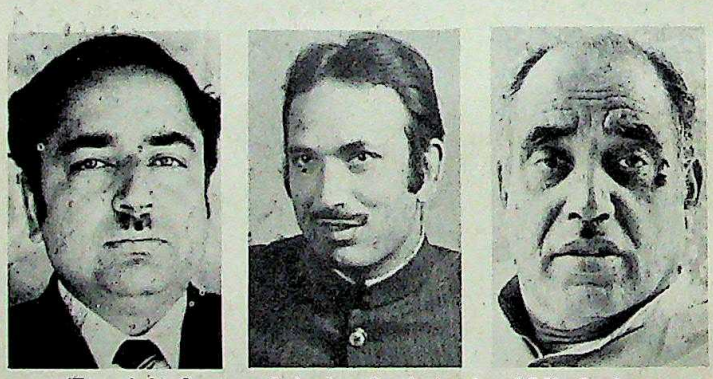
The Opposition is also hoping to exploit the state Government's refusal to postpone elections till the Assembly constituencies were delimited on the basis of the 1981 census. In a joint press conference held on April 19, BJP state President Thakur Baldev Singh, Lok Dal state chief Sheikh Abdul Rehman and Dhanraj Bargotia of the Janata Party accused the chief minister of denying two more seats to Jammu. Their accusations were based on the interim report of the Delimitation Commission headed by Justice Wazir Jankinath which recommended that the Valley should only be given 40 seats against its present 42. The commission also recommended that the number of seats in Jammu should be increased from 32 to 34 as its population had grown. For the NC every seat counts as even in the last elections it could only win nine of the 32 seats in Jammu while the remaining seats were shared by the Opposition.

THE ANTI-ALLIANCE forces in the Congress(I) received a further boost when Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi visited Jammu on April 14 and openly criticised the state Government in Farooq's presence. Mrs Gandhi did not mince her words and accused Farooq of joining hands with the communal forces in the Valley. In an indirect reference to the NC-BJP alliance in the Jammu civic election she said that "things became too hard to comprehend when certain forces who publicly denounced communalism sought electoral understanding with them".

Much to Farooq's chagrin Mrs Gandhi was accompanied by the Union Deputy Minister for Law and Company Affairs Ghulam Nabi Azad who has staunchly opposed any electoral alliance with the NC. It was Azad who launched a blistering attack against Farooq in 1978 and documented charges of corruption against his family which soured relations considerably. In addition Farooq is also very upset over the fact that Mrs Gandhi has taken no steps to control Mufti Mohammad who has been spewing out venom against the NC.

Predictably the hawks in both parties are exercising their influence against an alliance of any kind. Farooq is under pressure from the followers of his brother-in-law G.M. Shah to stay clear of the Congress(I). Mufti Mohammad and Azad in the Congress(I) are against any truck with the NC. The voices of more moderate elements like former chief minister Syed Mir Qasim who has a sizeable following in the Valley has been lost in the din raised by the hardliners. Only towards the end of the fortnight was Qasim called to New Delhi for consultations. Says Qasim: "My stand is abundantly clear. I have always been in favour of seat adjustments between these two secular forces led by the National Conference and the Congress-(I). The fight between the two will lead to destabilisation of a secular government. The Congress(I) can serve as a responsible and constructive opposition."

Predictably, the hawks in both parties are exercising their influence against an alliance of any kind. The voices of more moderate elements like former chief minister Syed Mir Qasim have been lost in the din raised by the hardliners.



(From left) Congress(I) leaders Syed, Azad and Mir Qasim: difference of opinion

Optimistic Assessment: Qasim's appeal is lost on a party that is dominated by the anti-alliance forces. At a meeting of the PCC(I) held in Srinagar in April, almost e member opposed Qasim's suggestions denounced his activities as anti-party. M Mohammad set the tone of the discus by painting a rosy picture of the C ress(I)'s poll prospects. Most of the p workers echoed his sentiments. But, in a fact the fear of desertions haunts the C ress(I) in the Valley.

For the time being the party is together by the hope that they will retu power. According to the assessment b hardline faction, the Congress(I) c definitely win 20 seats in Jammu and 10 in the Valley. Says an anti-NC le "Though we are bound by the Central comand we cannot afford to commit su by surrendering the party's interests t NC. After working hard for over a decad are now capable of posing a serious thre Farooq who criticises our leadership to cheap popularity in state."

In the face of such cl Farooq is placed in a del position without much r for manoeuvre. There is doubt that he would lik preserve his good equa with Mrs Gandhi and R But on the other hand justifiably annoyed by comments. He confided anger to a journalist rec when he said: "But I ca possibly agree to com terms with a Congress(I) whose president spends time abusing my family trying to create misunders ding between me and prime minister. I wante avoid a confrontation what do I do when the I Congress rabble-rouser the state are hell-bent on ting problems?"

Some sections of Congress(I), however, r tain that Mrs Gandhi is encouraging alliance forces as a part of her ov strategy to curb Farooq. The effectivene this strategy showed when Farooq clim down from his original stand and expr his willingness to enter into an alliance the Congress(I), "in the interest of sec forces".

But any hope of an alliance was da last week when Farooq met Rajiv Gand a last-minute bid to come to an unders ing. The talks failed and both parties qu announced that they will go it alone. means that the time has come for Faroo finally win his political spurs.

—PRABHU CHA

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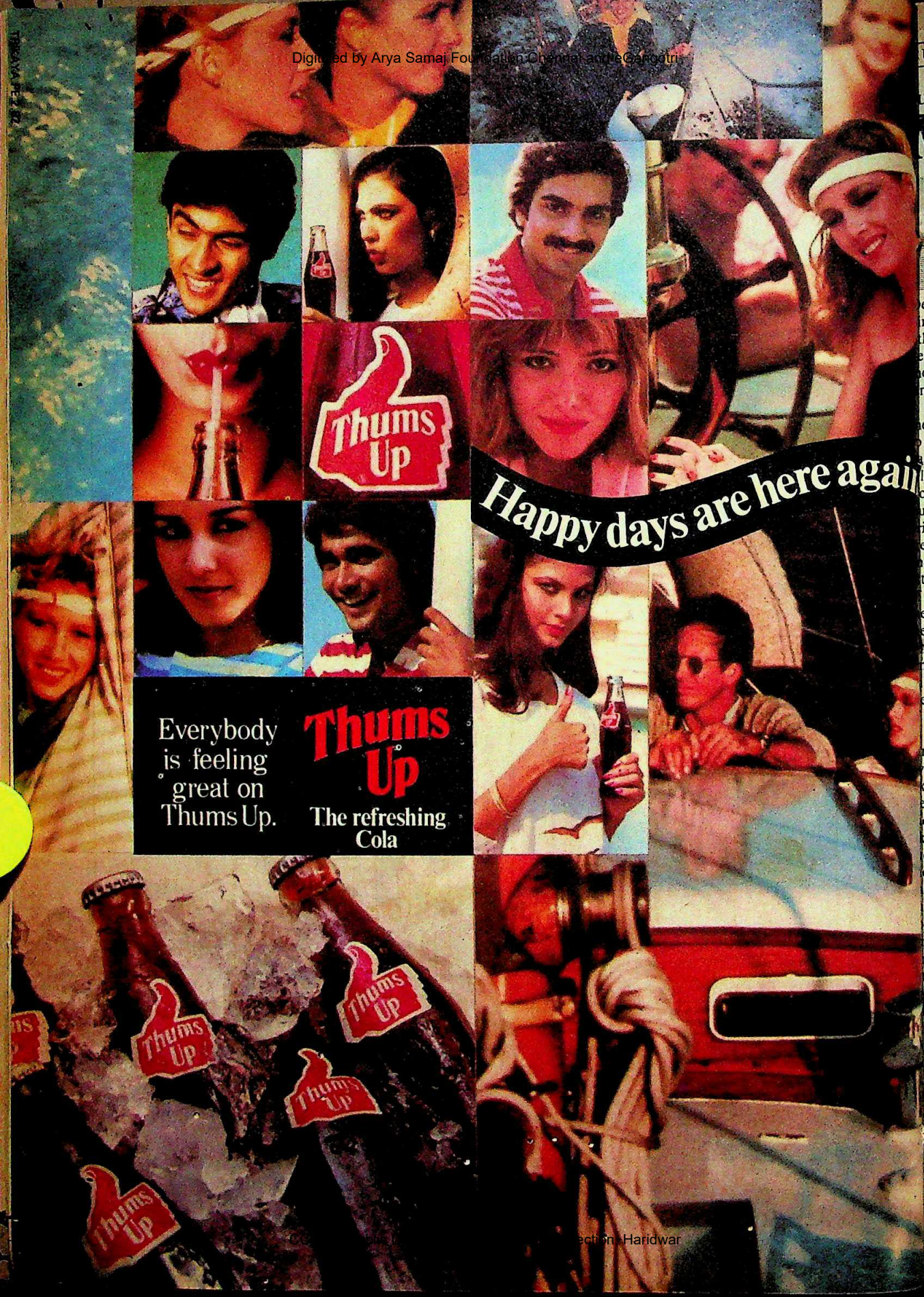

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UNJAB

Murder Most Foul

THE LONE gunman who stood near the imposing gates of the Golden Temple last fortnight could not have done his job more effectively. In one fatal hail of bullets he gunned down eputy Inspector General of Police Avtar ngh Atwal and critically injured two thers. In the process he also laid bare the elplessness of the Punjab Government in e face of mounting extremist vio- nce.

In fact, the shooting advertised e Punjab Government's inability cope with the situation as nothing s ever done before. Atwal was lled in broad daylight barely yards om his official car and bodyguard. ut after the killing, both Atwal's iver and bodyguard thought dis- etion the better part of valour d sped away in the official car. A tle further away a posse of jawans the Punjab Armed Police joined e fleeing crowds without making e slightest effort to nab the assas- . Even later as all officialdom in mritsar descended on the spot the litants in the Temple celebrated eir triumph by loosing off a volley shots into the air.

Brutal Shock: Atwal's killing me as a shock to the entire state. en Sikhs who sympathise with the kali movement were appalled that e sanctity of the Golden Temple d been violated. By the next day kali leaders had also gone into a ddle to discuss the situation that d arisen after the murder. Akali ders like Harchand Singh Longo- l and Gurcharan Singh hra immediately went on re- rd to denounce the murder no uncertain terms. The only te of discord was struck by implacable Sant Jarnail gh Bhindranwale who des- bed the deed as "the handi- rk of the Government to lign Sikhs". Fortunately, indranwale's was for once one voice. Privately Akali ders admit that the killing of vout Sikh as he stepped out he Golden Temple does their gion little credit.

There were many who felt t the state Government should have seized the opportunity to stage a lightning raid on the Guru Nanak Niwas and haul out the killer. They point out that this was the one occasion when public opinion would have permitted such an action. But apparently no such option was ever contemplated. No local official could take the responsibility for this step. And even at a higher level nobody was prepared to take the risk. One senior Cabinet minister argues that the Government would have to swamp the state with police before it entered the Golden Temple and says: "We were caught unawares." Chief Minister Darbara Singh who rushed to Delhi to consult his bosses says blandly: "We are not thinking on these lines." The state's final reaction after a meeting chaired by Director-General of Police C.K. Sawhney was to write to the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) authorities requesting them to hand over the killer.

It also appears unlikely that the police force is in any shape to take any kind of an initiative. In recent months police morale has been tumbling. Atwal's killing sent it plunging to a new low. From the start Atwal had been in the forefront of the Government's fight against the extremists. He was also the district police chief under whose jurisdiction Chowk Mehta Dera came, at the time of Bhindranwale's surrender in 1981. And he went on to take charge of Jullundur range which has been the scene of considerable extremist activity. In addition he had succeeded in building up sources of information within extremist groups. As such, Atwal was said to be at the top of the extremists' hit-list and senior police officers say they had warned him not to go to the Golden Temple. Atwal, however, insisted that "as a Sikh it was his right and duty to pay homage".

Atwal (top) and the scene of the assassination: extremist violence

Changed Situation: By a strange twist of fate the one man who reaps a benefit from the present state of affairs is Chief Minister Darbara Singh. Until the shooting took place it appeared that Darbara Singh's tenure in office was nearly drawing to an end. Earlier in the fortnight Congress(I) General Secretary Rajiv Gandhi had visited the state in what appeared to be an effort to find a successor to Darbara Singh.

During his visit Rajiv took several unusual steps all of which appeared to indicate that Darbara Singh was on his way out. He even offered to meet MLA's and ministers individually to seek their views on a solution to the Punjab problem. In the event he let himself in for more than he bargained for. Politicians of opposing factions each vied for the honour of being the first to advise Rajiv. At least twice Darbara Singh and state party President Hansraj Sharma had to intervene to separate clashing MLA's. The situation got so out of hand

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that finally Rajiv had to come out from his room to calm the storm, saying: "This is not a bus stand. I shall see each member. Please have patience."

After a semblance of peace was restored 40-odd MLA's met Rajiv. But their advice when it came, was restricted to either "remove Darbara Singh" or "retain Darbara Singh," depending on which faction the MLA belonged to. Prominent Congress(I) leaders like Sharma, former Haryana governor Harcharan Singh Brar and Amrinder Singh, MP, also did their bit to fan the flames of dissidence, much to the chagrin of the chief minister who tried to keep a brave face on the whole affair.

Confident Assertion: The dissidents who had met Rajiv earlier in New Delhi came out of the meeting elated. One or two went as far as to say: "You can take it that Darbara Singh is as good as gone." Amrinder Singh who had invited several dissidents including some ministers to lunch earlier, and whose name was being touted as a prospective successor, thought that everything was in his favour. "The majority is with me," he announced confidently to newsmen. Two MLA's Gopal Chatrath and Brahm Mohindra, however chided Singh for coming out in the open and said that only 14 of the 40 MLA's who had met Rajiv wanted a change of leadership.

Emboldened by the signals they were getting from the high command, the dissidents stepped up their unrelenting campaign against the dissidents. The next day the Governor Anant Pershad Sharma was swamped by guests who claimed his attention. First the PCC(I) president sought his counsel. A day later, half a dozen MLA's met him to complain that the chief minister was using the administration to "terrorise" them. Next the dissidents besieged House Speaker Brij Bhushan Mehra, urging him to nominate them to various House committees. The rumour mill finally came to the conclusion that Amrinder Singh would be the next chief minister and that former speaker Ravi Inder Singh would be installed as his deputy.

The main purpose of Rajiv's visit was to ensure a government that would be able to deal with the extremists. But the murder at the Golden Temple put an end to much of the talk of immediate change. It is generally agreed that Mrs Indira Gandhi cannot ditch Darbara Singh till a decent interval has elapsed after the killing. Nor can she negotiate with the Akalis under threat of violence. So for the time being the Government flounders on, wracked by dissension, facing opponents who grow more powerful, and more reckless, every day.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

B.S. SANDHU

Safe Hideout

ONE OF the most vehement charges flying about in the charged air of Punjab today is that the Guru Nanak Niwas in Amritsar, in the precincts of the Golden Temple, is a haven for secessionists and anti-national elements. Last fortnight, this seemed to have been proved when it was "discovered" that Balbir Singh Sandhu, the self-styled secretary-general of the National Council of Khalistan, had been operating for over a year from Room No. 32 in the Niwas. This is obviously a source of considerable embarrassment for the Akali Dal, because Dal chief Harchand Singh Longowal, when asked about Sandhu's presence in the heart of Sikhdom, vehemently denied that Sandhu was staying in the Niwas.

Longowal's denials cut no ice with newsmen who were later invited by Sandhu's supporters to the Niwas to meet the ardent Khalistani. Sandhu is quite confident that he will not be thrown out because when Onkar Singh Mattenangal, general secretary of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), asked him to quit the Niwas he flatly refused to do so. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale later warned SGPC authorities: "A Sikh has a right to stay in the Niwas and the SGPC has no business to remove anyone from there."

Sandhu: ardent Khalistani

At the moment, Sandhu is busy issuing certificates to Sikhs who want to seek work in West Germany as 'political refugees'. As the Khalistan Council is banned in India, its members can claim political refugee status in West Germany. As Sandhu says: "If my writ does not run here, it at least does in another country where I am helping my brethren."

Determined Activist: A novelist-turned-political activist, Sandhu, 47, was inducted into the Khalistan movement by Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan in the '70s. Ever since then, the talkative Sandhu, who once edited a village development journal called *Dharti de Lal* for the zilla parishad, has been the right hand man of Chauhan, the self-styled chairman of the National Council of Khalistan. The combination began a movement to install a transmitter at the Golden Temple. Chauhan then went abroad to publicise and collect funds for the Khalistan cause, as well as for 'Radio Golden Temple'.

Earlier, Sandhu had made it to the headlines when in 1979, on Baisakhi day—the day of the birth of the Khalsa—he and another Sikh wandered around Anandpur Sahib with bullock yokes round their necks. This novel image of protest was, according to Sandhu's mentor Chauhan, meant to symbolise the slavery of the Sikhs. However, Prakash Singh Badal of the Akali Dal was quite annoyed with the stunt; said he: "Stunts do not pay."

Sandhu is totally committed to the creation of Khalistan. Sitting in Room 32, he says: "More and more Sikhs realise that the Hindu Government of Mrs Gandhi shall never do justice. We have to snatch power whatever the means. The peasants are our real base and the more frustrated they are the better it is for us." He rejects the charge that he and Chauhan were collecting money and that the Central Intelligence Agency was behind the Khalistan demand. "This is all nonsense," Sandhu asserts. "We do not need funds but men to fight and that we are getting."

Dream State: Sandhu has even worked out the salient features of his dream state. Asked what exactly he means by Khalistan, he pulls out a handwritten document in English and Punjabi, which he says is their 'constitution'. The proposed 'Republic of Khalistan' will have a presidential form of government, Sikhism will be the state religion—in fact, the guiding force behind matters economic, social and legal will be the Guru Granth Sahib—and the Shiromani Akali Dal will be the only political party. Non-Sikhs will have to be guided by the Sikh religion in all matters, and will be barred from holding high judicial, administrative and military posts. No one will be allowed to preach against Sikhism or to propagate atheism.

Guru Nanak's philosophy that each individual should remember God, earn his own livelihood and share his earnings with his fellow men will guide the economic and political philosophy of the state. Sandhu's handwritten 'constitution' also says that the republic would maintain cordial and friendly relations with the neighbouring countries and will not be part of any power bloc. As things stand, however, the enthusiastic Sikh is not likely to see his dream take material shape.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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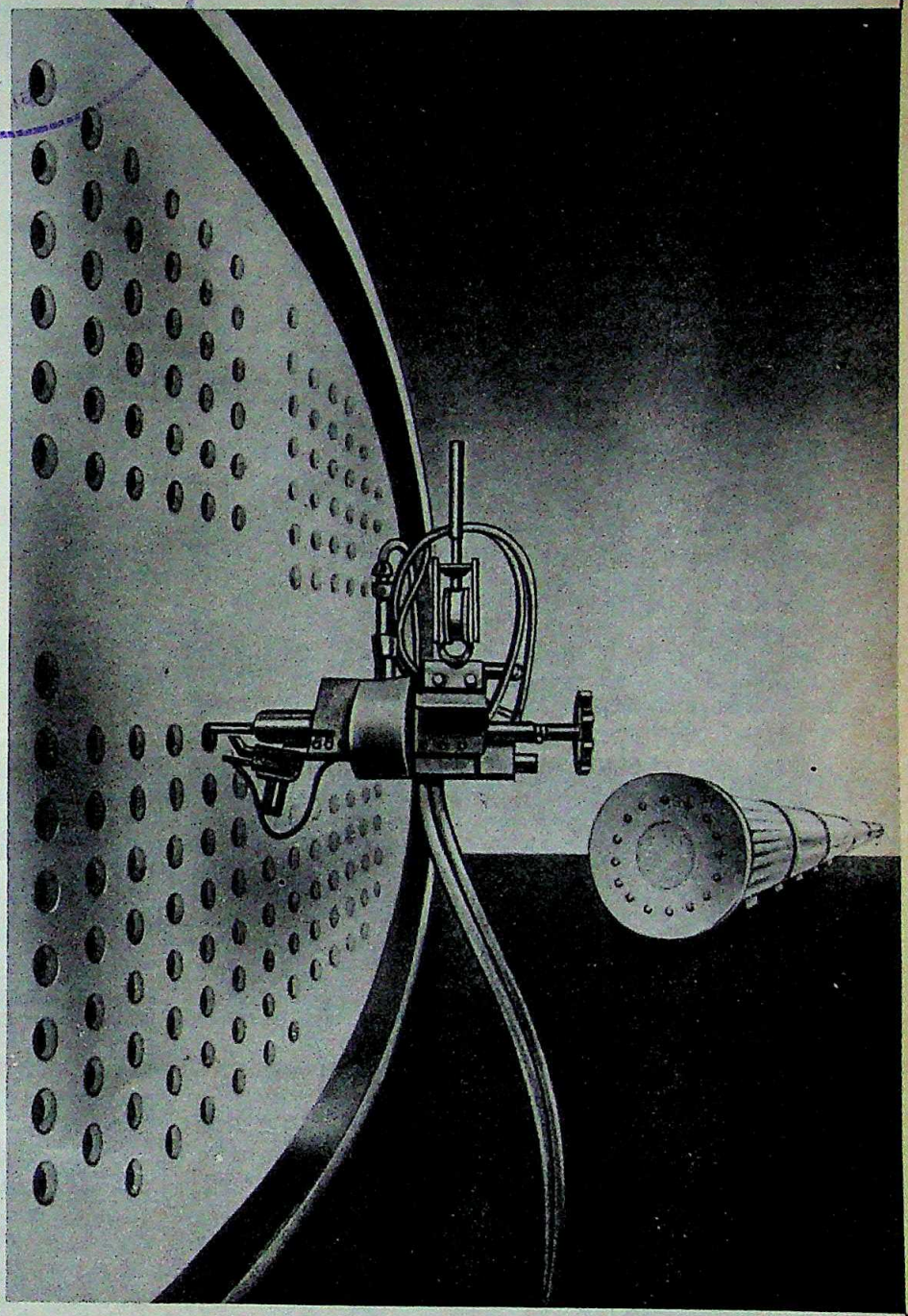

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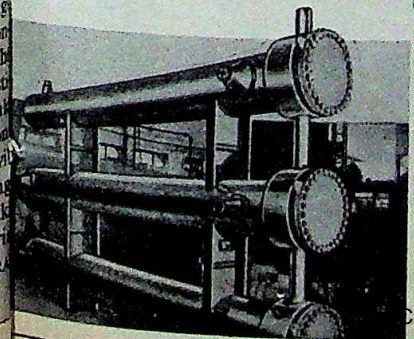

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UTTAR PRADESH

Battle Of The Bahus

FOR WELL over a year now, the Indian public has hungrily devoured each succeeding episode of the gripping Gandhi vs Gandhi political serial. Last fortnight, however, with the introduction of a new member to the star-studded cast, the plot took a dramatic turn. The new star is Sonia Gandhi, Italian-born wife of leading player, Rajiv Gandhi, and though her debut was made in the rather barren locale of Amethi, it was an impressive enough performance.

Rajiv's periodic visits to this pampered VIP constituency are about the only time his constituents jerk awake from their soporific slumber. But with the glamorous, sari-draped Sonia in tow, there was no mistaking the renewed political interest in what could only be titled the Battle of the Bahus. Even the most naive political observer harboured no doubts that the induction of Sonia into Rajiv's usual khadi-clad retinue was meant to counter the threat emanating from estranged freckle-faced sister-in-law, Maneka Gandhi, who has declared her intention to contest the parliamentary elections from Amethi in the next poll.

Initiation: Though one visit is too early for anything but snap judgments, it is possible that the Sonia factor could neutralise, to some extent, the growing influence of the Rashtriya Sanjay Manch (RSM) Maneka's fledgling party, in what is the most populous and strategic of Indian states. For someone who has so far remained secluded from her husband's political activities, and with hardly any personal experience of rural India, Sonia displayed remarkable *savoir faire*. She was the star attraction on the *padayatra* (walking tour) of seven dusty villages undertaken by Rajiv, striding along at his side with her head demurely covered, breaking away often to greet village women with folded hands and a few sentences in hesitant Hindi.

Her refrain was standard enough. "Namaste, I shall come again," she repeated like a well-taught litany. Her education continued as she drove along, with Pravin Kumar, former Uttar Pradesh minister of state for planning, occasionally remin her to smile and wave at the villagers. showed no hesitation in turning d muddy lanes or squatting down Indian-s for a frugal village meal; and her remari INDIA TODAY sounded convincing enoug had wanted to come here on my own m earlier, but then I decided to accom Rajiv. The reason I am here is that my band has made some pledges to these pe and I want to help him in keeping them. talking to these people and giving them a rances is not enough. Something will hav be done for them first."

Wooing Constituents: Amethi's v gers, grown weary with the constant att ion, have become unusually blasé ab such things. As Ram Awtar, a frail-loo farmer, remarked scornfully: "I don't t much of all this *tamasha*. We have been ring such promises for such a long time that to us it's just so many words whic longer convince us." Local Congress(I) ders, however, are visibly elated at the in duction of Sonia into the arena. Said Sewak, the local Congress(I) MLA

BHAWAN SINGH

Sonia accompanying Rajiv on a *padayatra* in Amethi: new twist to the plot

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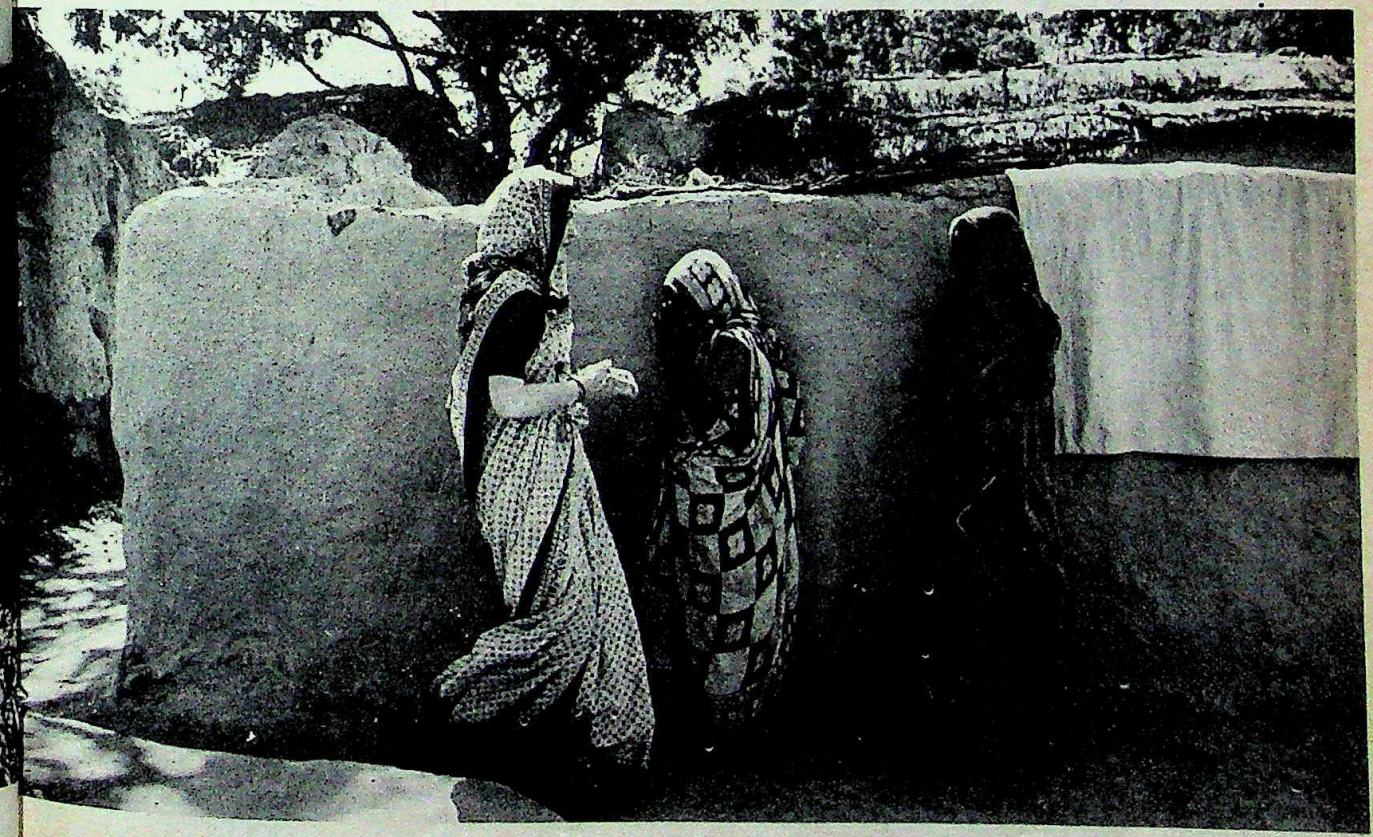
Sonia, the new star of the show, squats for a village meal (above) and greeting curious villagers: savoir faire



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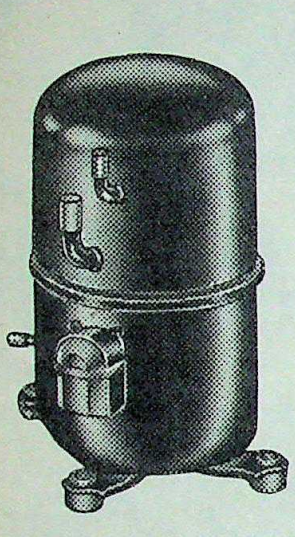

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methi: "Sonia's short visit has made quite n impact. Unlike Maneka, who sells a ob-story every time she is here and might ave a strong emotional appeal, Sonia has a trong personal appeal which should go a ong way in countering the staged gimmickry f the Manch."

And that, in the end, was what it all oiled down to: the counter to Maneka. But onia obviously has a long way to go before he can match the street savvy of her rebel- ous sister-in-law. This time, as compared to is last visit, the cheers for Rajiv were loud nough; but the clapping was less sponta- eous and the slogans just a little more for- ed. Even Rajiv, sweating profusely each me he stepped out of his air-conditioned mbassador, seemed more testy than usual. Sometimes these people ask for the impos- ble; and going by the stack of requests I col- ct on each trip, I think it becomes counter- roductive in the long run. Each time you ommit yourself to a request or demand, the ore they feel that their work has to be done mmediately."

This trip, however, Rajiv had more help han usual. Accompanying him on his three- ay tour were Doon School chum Arun ingh and his wife, Nina; Siddhartha Reddy, ho is supposed to be Rajiv's caretaker for methi; the state's Minister for Irrigation nd Industries, Vir Bahadur Singh; Uttar radesh Minister of State for Forests, Sanjay ingh, and Deepa Kaul, daughter of Central inister of State for Education, Sheila Kaul. oyalty, it appeared, has no limits. At Deo- ali, where Rajiv's entourage halted for the ight, the only two rooms available were al- tted to Rajiv and Arun Singh with their ives. Vir Bahadur Singh, a state Cabinet mi- ister, had to sleep outside in a tent. When sked to comment, Singh loyally stated, "I refer sleeping out in the open."

Battle Royal: From Amethi, Rajiv rove to Lucknow where he inaugurated a oisy mass gathering of some 30,000 village radhans from all over the state sponsored y the state Government. But obviously, the al reason for the trip was to give Sonia me political exposure and blood her for e battle ahead.

Rajiv himself made it clear that it was aneka who really mattered when he told DIA TODAY at Lucknow airport, "It is not e who resort to gimmickry but the Manch. ey have made it a tactical, strategic and ell-planned exercise to drag our family into for political gain. But as far as we are con- rned, we see no threat." Countered Manch ader Akbar Ahmed: "Nor, for that matter, o we. The stakes are too high on both sides. w that the heat is on, let's see who wins battle for Amethi."

—DILIP BOBB with
ANAND SAGAR in Amethi

ORISSA

Sowing Trouble

SCANDALS follow each other in rapid succession in Orissa. But this time there is one difference—the hard pressed Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik has changed his tactics. Instead of trying to stall investigations following reports of gigantic losses in the rabi crop due to defective paddy seeds, Patnaik lost no time in implementing the findings of an inquiry committee instituted by himself. Moving swiftly, he suspended State Seeds Corporation(ssc) Managing Director Sanat Kumar Rakhit, Deputy Director, Agriculture (Cuttack), Mohammad Zubair and Assistant Director (Inputs), Jameswar Ray, and ordered a vigilance inquiry into the affair. Said a disgusted opposition leader: "The action is like a sinner calling God at his deathbed. But this is certainly not going to wash away his sins in allowing the state and the people to be cheated."

Patnaik: reaping a whirlwind

Submitted last fortnight, the report of Agricultural and Rural Development Commissioner K. Srinivasan confirmed paddy losses worth Rs 2.38 crore. Employing field tests and spot verifications, Srinivasan pointed out that the yield rate of land using these seeds would be about three quintals per hectare as against the minimum normal rabi yield of 20 quintals per hectare. The report held some officials responsible for this and suggested launching criminal and civil cases against the suppliers—Swastik Traders—and their de-registration as contractors.

According to official sources, the seeds scandal was born following the havoc wrought by last year's floods. The deluge had led to the loss of the entire kharif crop in some districts, particularly Cuttack and Puri. To offset the losses, the Government launched an ambitious drive to supply certified seeds at subsidised rates for the coming summer paddy crop. To counter the paucity of seeds in the state,the ssc invited tenders for providing 5,000 quintals of high-yielding 'Pareja' paddy seeds developed by the Orissa Agriculture University.

Defective Seeds: The contract was bagged by the Cuttack-based Swastik Traders but what they supplied to the ssc were ordinary grains obtained from a Nagpur-based grain merchant. As a result recipient farmers in the five districts of Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar found to their dismay that despite their best efforts the seedlings were not maturing. Meanwhile some deputy directors went ahead with further purchases from the same firm without any proper verification and supplied more farmers. The cumulative effect was that the paddy crop in some 7,000 hectares died.

The newly acquired alacrity with which Chief Minister Patnaik went about exposing official culpability in this calamity was clearly aimed at offsetting the earlier mustard oil scandal which continues to rock the state (INDIA TODAY, April 15). Earlier, Patnaik successfully prevented the Assembly's Public Undertakings Committee headed by Hemananda Biswal, which inquired into the oil deal with Rohit Poddar of Delhi, from tabling its report before its terms expired on March 31. In a last ditch measure, however, Biswal made his findings public and circulated copies of the report to the press. Biswal reportedly quoted officials to suggest that the deal was initiated by Patnaik himself. Secretariat sources also add that it was, in fact, Patnaik who had expressed his "desire to procure oil" at a meeting attended by high officials in December 1980.

How Poddar came to know of the Government's desire to procure oil remains a mystery, since no public tenders were invited. However, to prevent further damage last fortnight, a panicky Patnaik suspended G.C. Panda, deputy manager (oil) of the State Civil Supplies Corporation(scsc). Panda had been deputed to Delhi to certify the dispatch, on the basis of which Poddar received payment from the bank where the scsc had opened letters of credit. Official sources allege that Panda was responsible for excess payment since seven truckloads of oil certified by him never reached their destination. They also allege that Panda's son was made Poddar's representative in Orissa.

Apportioning Blame: Nevertheless, Panda told INDIA TODAY: "You will never get the full truth and it will be known only if a commission is set up. But I tell you that I

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have done nothing wrong. It was the managing director who finalised the deal and allowed Rs 3 crore to be drawn by Poddar. I have been suspended but not a single charge has been framed against me till now. I will reply at a proper time." Meanwhile, SCSC Managing Director G.V.L.N. Murthy's request seeking voluntary retirement, one month before his actual retirement in May-end, was turned down. Though Murthy continues to evade newsmen, sources close to him allege that his retention is aimed at preventing him from exposing high-level official involvement.

The controversy has shifted from the Assembly to the constituencies where the Opposition, led by Biju Patnaik has launched a publicity blitz to undermine the Congress(I) ministry. Leader of the unified Janata Party, Biju Patnaik has organised public meetings in quick succession at Puri, Cuttack, Dhenkenal and other district headquarters, charging the chief minister with direct involvement in corruption cases—the focus being on mustard oil.

The raging storm has even shaken up ruling party circles at the Centre. Even though in a recent statement, Akshay Panda, Congress(I) Rajya Sabha MP, accused Biswal of joining hands with Biju Patnaik and other opposition elements, he was forced to c cede that irregularities, like placing order the basis of offers received without inv tenders, before the approval of the bo and the Government was obtained, had b committed. Already Janata MLA Ashok has filed a case in the sessions court aga the chief minister and others, alleging they misused their official position to fav Poddar and charging Patnaik with ha knowingly violated the law. Whatever verdict, Patnaik's political career is undo tedly at stake in the anxious days that str ahead.

—FARZAND AHMED in Bhubane

Debris littering the landscape: trail of destruction

WEST BENGAL

Sudden Havoc

IT WAS around 7 in the evening on April 12. Dark clouds had gathered on the north-western sky over Gaighata, 40 km north of Calcutta. Suddenly, there was an ear-splitting explosion, a flash of light; the heavens seemed to tumble earthwards. The nightmare lasted a couple of minutes, long enough for it to take 27 lives and render 6,000 people homeless in 12 villages. The tornado crossed over into Bangladesh to take another 31 lives there.

The Gaighata tornado was the second to hit India in the last two years, the earlier one having struck Keonjharghar in Orissa. It was preceded five years ago by one in Delhi where a bus full of passengers had gone off the road and turned turtle. On each occasion, the tornado left behind a trail of devastation made up of dead bodies, destroyed buildings and mangled electric poles and tubewells.

In Gaighata an entire pond was sucked dry by the tornado. Winds with an estimated speed of around 330 kmph grabbed up an old woman and her two grandchildren Rinku and Jashoda and carried them for 500 yards before they hit a tree and died instantly. As is typical of any tornado, the Gaighata one had a diameter of about 180 m and thus the destruction caused was along a narrow corridor leaving people and property outside its "walls" unaffected. Thus, while at Alasima village the Anchal panchayat and electricity board offices had been destroyed and a rice mill blown away, nobody knew where, the local Kali temple escaped.

Afterthoughts: Even as officials and politicians got down to the task of relief and rehabilitation and assessment of the damage to property—estimated to be around Rs 40 lakh—the villagers insisted that there had been "fireballs" when the "storm hit us". Meteorologists in Calcutta initially dismissed these as optical illusions only to admit later that such fireballs do occur during tornadoes and violent cyclones, like the one in Andhra Pradesh six years ago. The phenomenon, however, is still unexplained.

The Gaighata tornado once again caught scientists napping. It is not like a cyclone which can be located in the sea by meteorologists days before it strikes, enabling some preventive measures like shifting people from the coast to be undertaken. A tornado, on the other hand, develops all of a sudden out of a thunderstorm. Thus, even 48 hours after the devastation, T.S. Anjaneyulu, director, Calcutta Meteorological Centre, could not say how the tornado had occurred, what the wind speed had been or give any other details; he could only say: "It was not caught on our observation network."

The centre is not to blame. Even in countries like the United States, which have highly sophisticated equipment, a tornado can be forecast at best a bare half hour before it strikes. And this in a country which is highly prone to the killer storm. India, on the other hand, is struck by a tornado on an average of once every four years, mostly in the eastern and northern regions. Obviously, the meteorologists have little practice in dealing with the destructive winds, and there is little that man can do except clean up the debris afterwards.

—SUMANTA SEN

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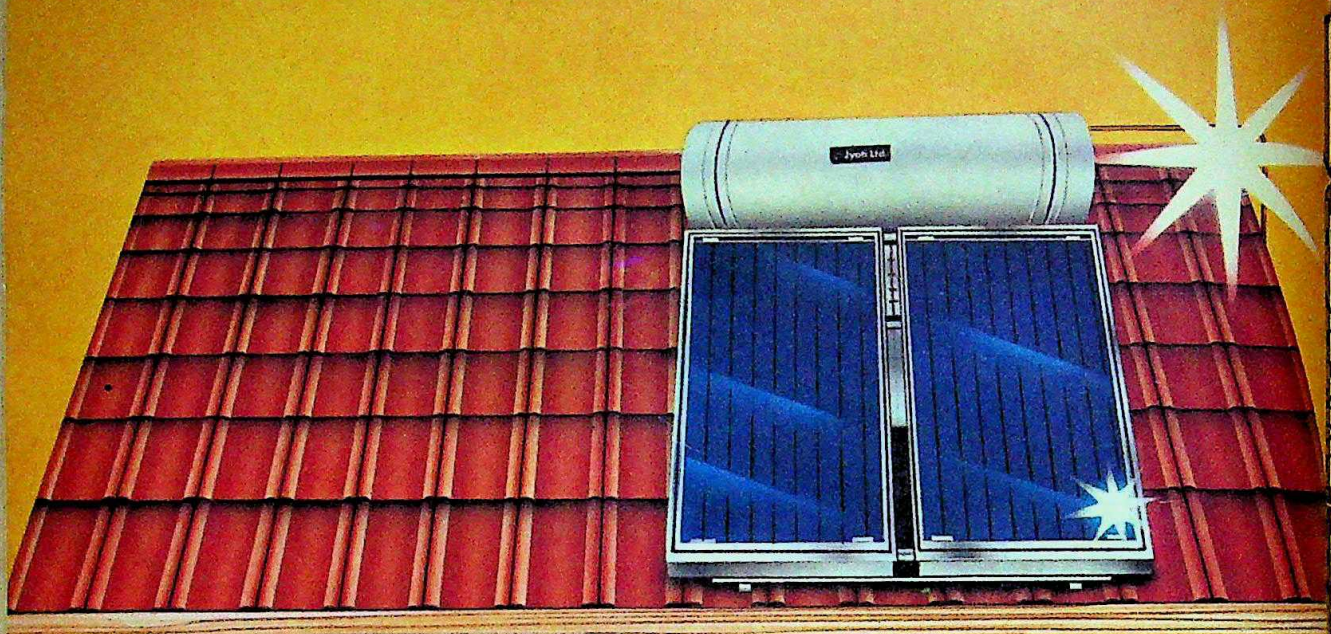

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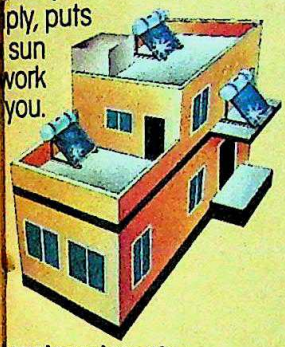

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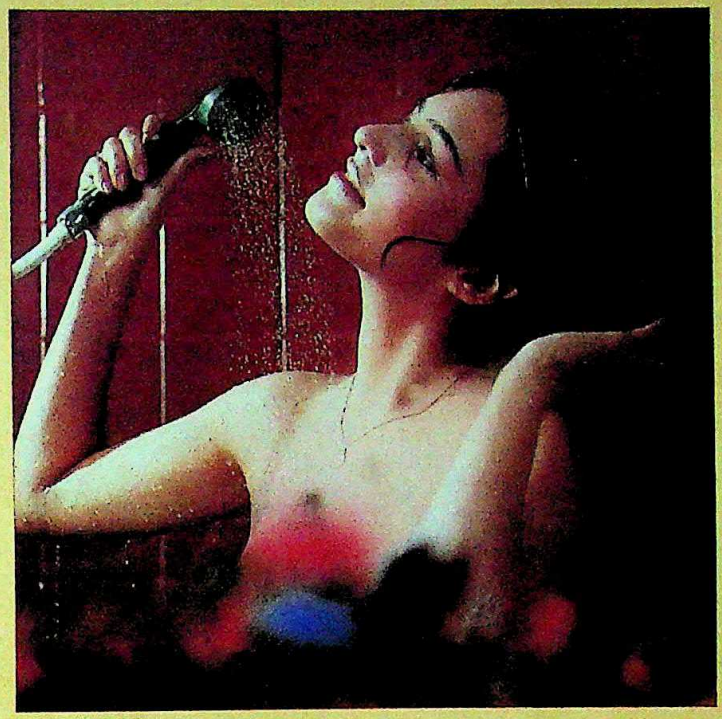

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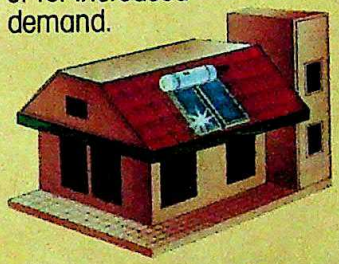

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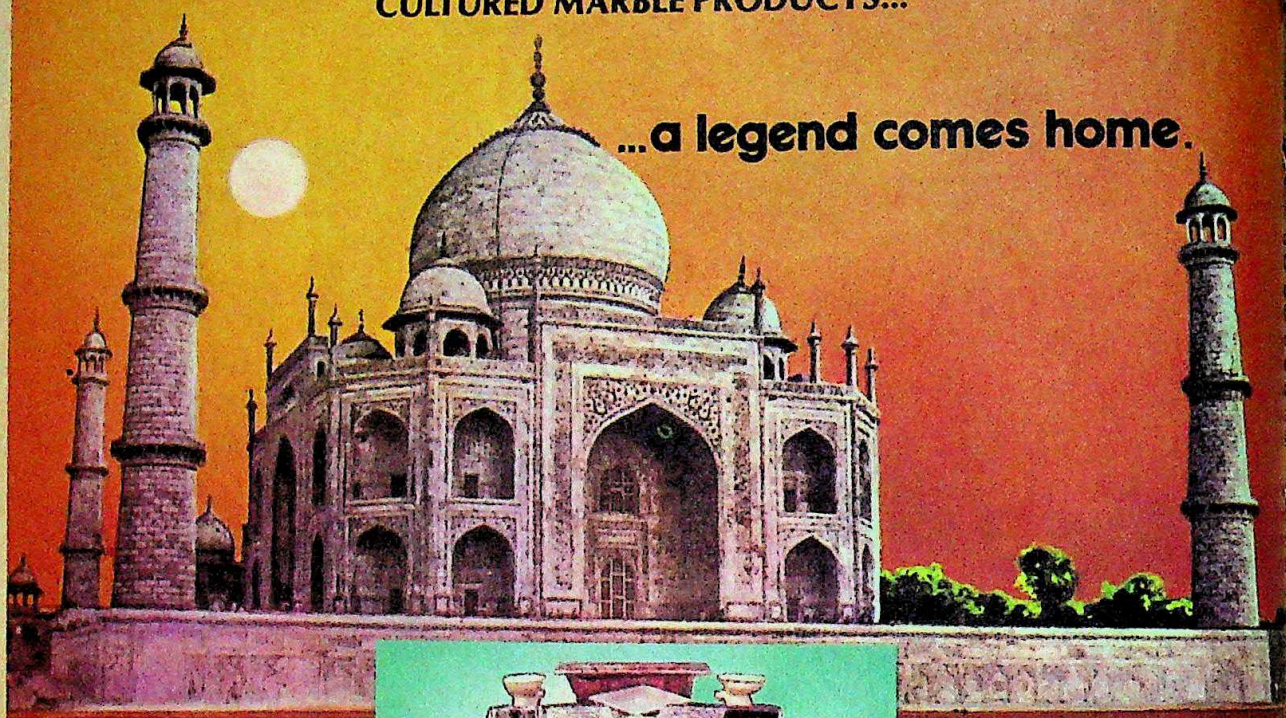

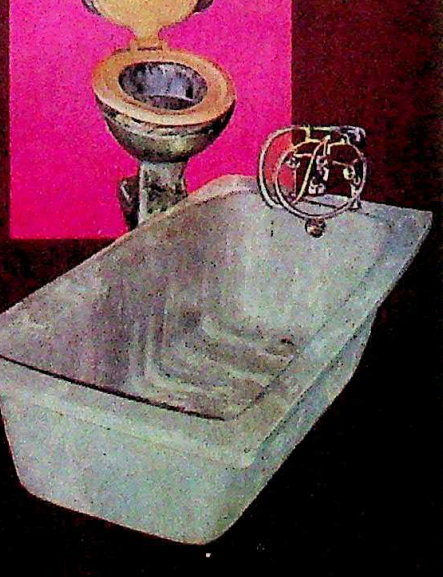

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SSAM

The Communal Divide

AT LEAST some things were back to normal in Assam last fortnight, even as stray killings continued and fresh riots broke out in Goalpara district. The "popular" ministry churned out press releases by the dozen after a series of Cabinet meetings and the corridors in Dispur yet again brimmed with hangers-on. As fly-by-night mediators from Delhi reappeared on the scene, the grape-vine again hummed with stories of infighting among the agitation leadership which has been groping for a new strategy to resume their agitation after school and college examinations are over.

What had observers on their toes, however, was not just the infighting. For the first time since the most durable mass movement in the country was launched in 1979 it was threatened by a communal divide. Leading one group was Nurul Hussain, the enigmatic vice-president of the All Assam Students Union (AASU) who led the organisation in the turbulent days of the elections while the top- level leadership was in jail. At a secret conclave held at J. Barua Law College in Gauhati the Muslims among the AASU leadership, who give the student body its prized secular character, issued an ultimatum which gave AASU leaders a fortnight to correct what it called a pro-Hindu communal tilt caused by pro-RSS elements".

The 15-point memorandum sought the removal of Joynath Sarma, chief of AASU's controversial volunteer force, the Swechha Sevak Bahini, severance of all links with the RSS and the BJP and a firm announcement on AASU's definition of a foreigner. The memorandum specifically mentioned the Nellie and Chawlkhowa Chapori killings of Muslims during the elections and demanded that AASU supporters not attend public meetings organised by the RSS and BJP.

Threatened Edifice: If the rebellion took the AASU leadership it was understandable. Over the years the organisation has kept its secular edifice intact and it was now threatened from within. Said a senior AASU executive member: "We have spurned all proposals to give preferential treatment to Bengali Hindus because we profess secularism. Now if our own Muslims go away the very cause for which the entire society rallied behind us will be lost." Added a Muslim student who participated in the meeting: "We had no choice. Communal elements were taking control of the organisation and this was the only way to check them."

The top leadership of AASU, however, did not seem to agree and an embarrassed Hussain had no answer to the argument that he could hardly blame Sarma for the killings: Sarma was in jail all through the election period when Hussain acted as the president. Says Sarma: "I vouch not just for myself. If anyone from my family is proved to be having links with the RSS I will quit."

The AASU leadership came out with a strongly-worded statement in favour of the Bahini. President Prafulla Mahanta and General Secretary Bhrigu Phukan said: "The volunteer force is meant purely to render welfare services and to promote physical culture among students, somewhat like the NCC." But even as a beleaguered Hussain belatedly went about issuing denials of the reports of his leading the rebellion,

Saikia (left), AASU's Sarma: shadow-boxing

some damage had already been done.

Political Stroke: Most AASU supporters blame Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia for having engineered the near split. The carefully planted news leak of Saikia's alleged contacts with AASU coincided with the Muslim rebellion and suddenly got the AASU leadership issuing defensive statements almost every day. Admitted a Congress(I) legislator close to Saikia: "Unlike Mrs Taimur who had firm faith in the *danda* we believe the agitation must be fought politically and all is fair in a political war." Saikia himself continued to maintain a low profile but must have had a few moments of glee as mediators went about trying for a patch-up.

The AASU leaders were not the only ones worried by the increasing communal divide in a society which had never seen Hindu-Muslim tension. Their loyalties shaken by Nellie and Chawlkhowa Chapori, the Muslims seemed to be gradually drifting away from the mainstream of Assamese society. Said Sabita Goswami, editor of the weekly *North-east Times* and a staunch supporter of the movement: "In the past I never saw our Muslims bother much about the external symbols. Now they suddenly seem to have remembered that it will be unfortunate if false propaganda now achieves what 70 police battalions failed to do."

At the national level, Mrs Gandhi, rattled by the adverse propaganda in the Islamic world and Pakistan President General Zia-ul-Haq's attempts to capitalise on it, rushed former Supreme Court judge Baharul Islam—he is a candidate in the incomplete election for the Barpeta parliamentary seat —to the Gulf countries to explain the "correct situation" in Assam. Islam, who is an "indigenous" Assamese Muslim, explains the painful dilemma facing Assamese society more convincingly than most; says he: "The Assamese caste Hindus today have to make a choice between being a linguistic or a religious majority. If they want to be a linguistic majority they have to accept the Muslim immigrants who have been calling Assamese their mother tongue; if they want to be a religious majority they have to accept the Bengali Hindus. Indecision will make them a minority both ways."

Mediation Efforts: Conciliatory efforts were also being made elsewhere. While AASU issued a statement demanding a quick negotiated settlement to the problem, Supreme Court lawyer Anil Rattan Barthakur, an Assamese who has been unofficially associated with the negotiations in the past, flew into Gauhati and established contact with the agitation leadership. Barthakur is organising a national convention on Assam in Delhi with the blessings of Cabinet Secretary C.R. Krishnaswamy Rao Sahib and hopes to break the ice. "Attitudes have hardened but a solution is possible. We have been able to reach so close to it in the past," he said. Yet the AASU leadership now seems wary of the unofficial mediators who have in the past made and forgotten commitments which went far beyond their briefs.

Meanwhile, Saikia began executing his own strategy for reconciliation and, more than that, winning some legitimacy by issuing firm instructions to the Home Department to resume detection and deportation of post-1971 infiltrators. The Government is believed to have decided on the formation of foreigners tribunals in each of the 126 constituencies and, according to Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nihar Ranjan Laskar, these will be headed by non-Bengali and non-Assamese officers. Said a bureaucrat in Dispur: "This is Saikia's last gamble. All such efforts in the past have been pre-empted by the minorities lobby. You cannot have the best of both worlds."

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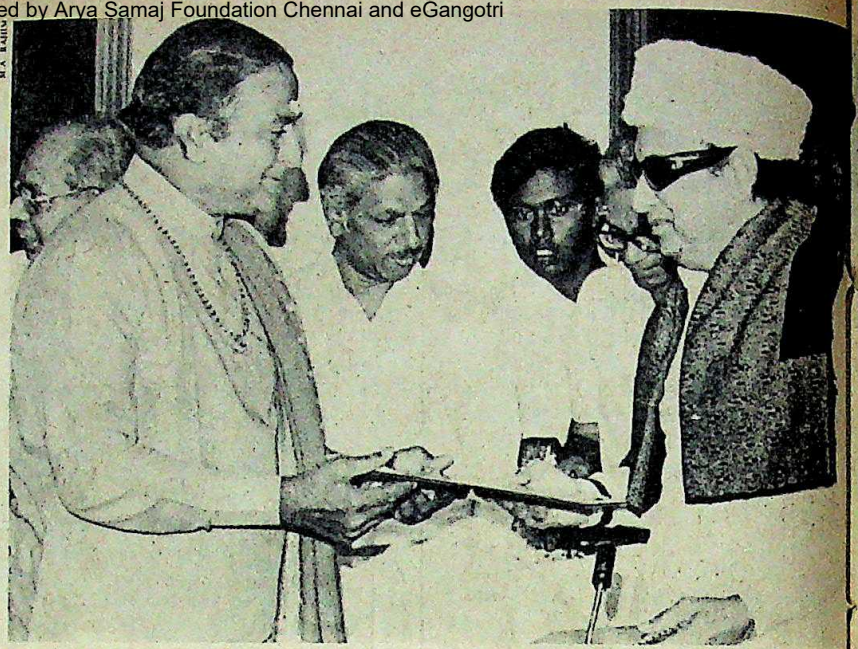
TAMIL NADU

Krishna Confluence



Rama Rao (left) and MGR exchange agreement documents: long-term plans

BY THE year 1990, no one in Madras may have to worry about where they get their next glass of water. An agreement signed last fortnight by chief ministers N.T. Rama Rao of Andhra Pradesh and M.G. Ramachandran of Tamil Nadu will, by the turn of the decade, bring the waters of the river Krishna over 550 km into Madras.

The signing ceremony at the conference hall of the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat on April 19 was marked by bouts of nostalgia as the film-hero chief ministers recalled their celluloid days, signed the accord, exchanged the papers and their pens. They then thrust a sweet into each other's mouth and garlanded each other for their achievement. And to make the bargain worthwhile for Andhra Pradesh, Rama Rao asked Ramachandran for a gift: the manuscripts on the Telugu heritage lying in the Saraswathi Mahal in Thanjavur and Connemara Library and Fort St George in Madras. With the deal for the water struck, Ramachandran unhesitatingly agreed to hand over the works.

Though the accord is to supply 15 billion cubic feet of water, Tamil Nadu is expected to get only 12 billion cubic feet since the rest will be lost on the way due to evaporation, seepage and pilferage. The water is to be tapped from Srisailam reservoir and carried through the Srisailam left branch canal passing through Kurnool and Cuddapah districts. It will then be dropped into the Pennar river at Chennumukapalli village also in Cuddapah district. The flow down the Pennar will be picked up at the Somasila dam and then to the Kandaleru reservoir on its way to Madras.

Ambitious Project: In fact, this reservoir will work as a water bank for Madras since the capacity of the city's three reservoirs —Red Hills, Poondi and Sholavaram—is only 6.5 billion cubic feet. Tamil Nadu's plan is to link Poondi and Chembarambakkam lake and raise the bunds of all four reservoirs to increase the capacity to 11.3 billion cubic feet. All this with a new treatment plant at Chembarambakkam and an improved distribution system for Madras city will hike the project's cost to a staggering Rs 1,000 crore.

While Andhra Pradesh Government sources claim that it will spend at least Rs 700 crore, Tamil Nadu's expenses—including what it will have to spend exclusively in the state—will be about Rs 300 crore. Both states are certain that they need Central funds and both are confident they will get them. Said Chief Minister Rama Rao: "I trust and hope Mrs Gandhi will not let me down. Despite the huge costs, it is intended to make available the basic need of drinking water to Madras." And with the next parliamentary elections not so far away, Prime Minister Mrs Gandhi will be compelled to provide the funds if only to prove that she is not biased against non-Congress(I) ruled states. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Ramachandran has agreed to give Rs 30 crore every six months as the state's share toward the "Madras water supply-cum-irrigation scheme".

Prolonged Wait: The accord has already faced a seven-year delay after Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh had agreed to give 5 billion cubic feet of water each, from their share, to meet the drinking water needs of Madras. At that time Ramachandran did not feel the urgency to stave off a water crisis in Madras. And the then Andhra Pradesh chief minister K. Vijayabhaskara Reddy was reluctant to sign an agreement because Rama Rao accused the Government of ignoring the state's own needs to provide water for a neighbour. But the scheme that finally shows hopes of being executed, provides, as originally planned, for enough water to farm 2.7 lakh acres in the four districts of Kurnool, Cuddapah, Chittoor and Nellore.

Nevertheless, the most optimistic of engineers feel the first drops of Krishna water cannot reach Madras for at least anot seven years. The scheme is yet to be clea by the Central Water Commission and uncertainty about the money flow may l to a further delay though the accord am tiously records that the project will be co pleted in the next three to six years.

In the past, Tamil Nadu had contemp ted two alternatives to meet the water ne of Madras. The first one—the Veeran project—that would have brought water a 218 km long pipeline, started by the D regime was abandoned by Ramachandr after Rs 30 crore had been spent. Experts it could still meet the water needs of Mad by spending about another Rs 90 crore. S gested former Tamil Nadu chief minister Karunanidhi: "The Veeranam scheme be taken up as an interim measure and w the Krishna waters finally arrive, the Vee nam scheme can serve the villages thro which it passes."

The other alternative considered Chief Minister Ramachandran was to br water from Kattalai near Tiruchi to Mad through a 425 km channel, a project that cost Rs 450 crore. But since farmers pro ted against the diversion of Cauvery wa Ramachandran even considered shifting capital from Madras to the banks of the C very, somewhere between Tiruchi and M durai.

Meanwhile, the euphoria of the Kris waters accord will soon wear off and Ta Nadu will have to work out more feas and immediate plans to tide over the crisis the 1990s.

—AMARNATH K. ME

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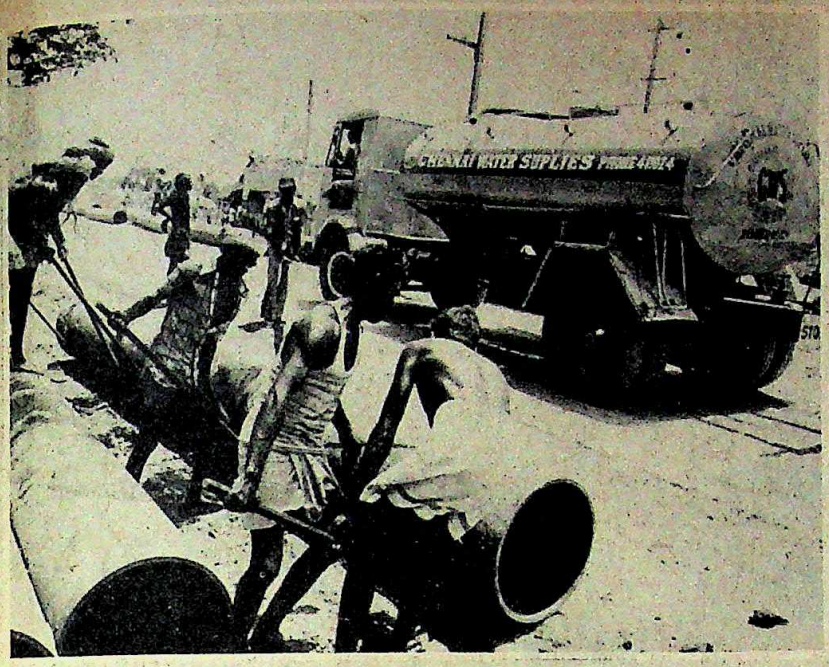

Workers laying pipes: risky measures

MADRAS

Pipe Dreams

WITH the critical summer months looming ahead, the Madras Metrowater Board is working desperately to slake the millions of parched throats in the water-starved city. Despite careful pumping of water from the three storage reservoirs—Red Hills, Sholavaram and Poondi—which supply the city, only Red Hills now remains active and threatens to dry up completely by mid-June. Recently, Metrowater launched an unprecedented Rs 90 lakh crash programme to tap the offshore ground water belt, extending from Tiruvanmiyur, the southern-most part of Madras city, to Muthukkadu, 10 km away on the east coast road to the famous coastal resort of Mahabalipuram. Last fortnight, however, the frenetic activity of Metrowater contractors digging up the east coast road and sinking large diameter pipes into the ground had raised a serious controversy.

According to R. Baratan, a local ground water expert, an impermeable clay barrier insulates the freshwater available slightly below the ground from the coastal saline or brackish water that occurs deeper. Said he: "In the absence of fresh rains, the indiscriminate exploitation of this offshore ground water —digging wells which burrow deeper and deeper underground—may either exhaust this freshwater supply or mix the saline water with the freshwater." The failure of the monsoons cannot be ruled out since there have been at least five instances in this century when it has failed in Tamil Nadu for four to five years in succession. The current spell has so far lasted only three consecutive years, and, Baratan believes that if the saline and the fresh waters mix, the entire offshore belt, which is fast becoming a teeming residential area, will suddenly be deprived of its only source of water.

What is worse, Metrowater is not the only organisation planning to tap these ground water resources. In recent years, large numbers of people have been buying plots of land on this coastal belt, building houses and digging their own private wells. An index of the growing demand is the land price. Said P. Gopinath, an artist living in the coastal Cholamandal village: "When I came here in 1968, the price of land was only Rs 5,000 an acre. Now it is a mind boggling Rs 2 lakh." Ever since the recent water crisis in Madras began, some 50 large private well owners have started supplying water to petrol tanker operators who are selling it for staggering profits.

Large Profits: Mani, the driver of one such lorry, revealed: "Lorry operators pay Rs 5 for every 12,000-litre fill at a private well. That volume of water sells easily for Rs 150 to Rs 200 in the city. There are roughly 50 to 100 diesel lorries, including Metrowater tankers, which now transport water to the city from the offshore areas and each lorry, on an average, makes 20 to 40 trips up and down each day." On a rough estimate, this would mean an average daily drain of some three to four million gallons of precious water. Another 1.5 million gallons is already being supplied daily to institutes like the Indian Institute of Technology.

The ill effects of this unrestrained plunder of water resources are already evident. According to Gopinath in the last two years, the coastal water table has dropped from five feet below the surface to between 20 and 25 feet. Said he: "If the water level falls by another five feet we will be irreparably ruined because beyond 30 feet we get only brackish water." Even the current level of exploitation has dried up many small household bore wells and the poorer villagers do not have the wherewithal to deepen them. Protested S. Thanikasalam, a leader of Vettuvankeni village: "Some of the household wells in our village which still yield water pump up only brackish water."

Nevertheless, H.B.N. Shetty, rural development and administration secretary, pointed out that a state government committee had carefully examined all possible ecological repercussions of the Metrowater crash drive before pronouncing it technically feasible. Said he: "The committee assessed the freshwater reserves on the offshore belt, made a careful study of the level at which brackish water was being found, and recommended that a daily five million gallons of water could be safely drawn without saline water getting mixed with the freshwater."

However, considering that these five million gallons are already being drawn by the new breed of entrepreneurs, Shetty revealed that the Government was actively considering legislation to check this racket. Said he: "The Metrowater Act gives us the power to check the exploitation of ground water. There will also be constant and careful monitoring of the withdrawals."

But the speed with which Metrowater is excavating the 1 km stretch of the east coast road from Kottivakkam village to Palavakkam in the first phase of the project, belies these safeguards. Cautioned Dr Sakthi Vadivel, director of the Centre for Water Resources at the Guindy Engineering College: "What matters is not only the extent of Metrowater's withdrawal, but also the spacing of the wells the board is going to dig." Meticulous regard for spacing, however, is hardly likely given the slipshod boring. Metrowater has clearly thrown caution to the wind. —S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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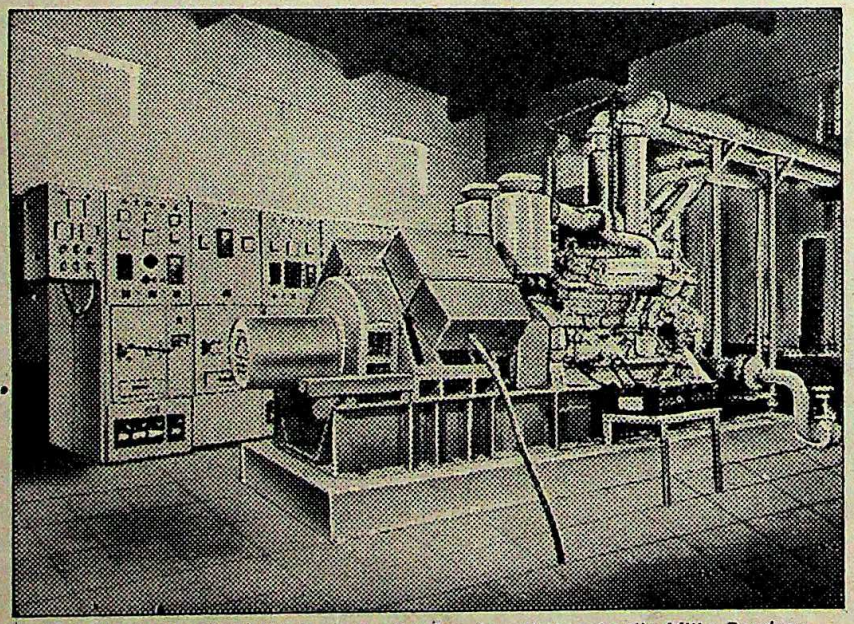

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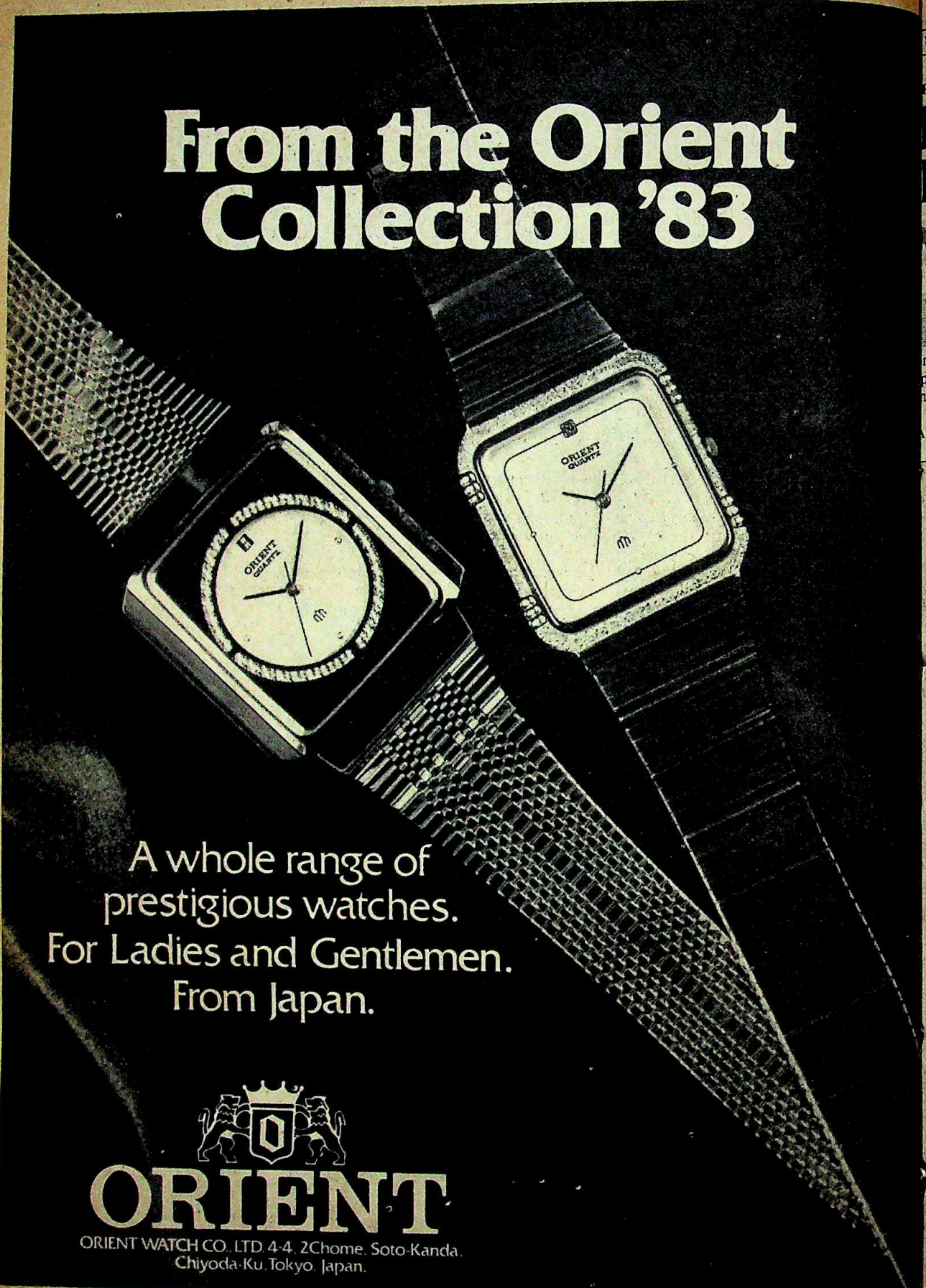

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RUNACHAL PRADESH

Tribal Trouble

WHEN trouble occurs, as it frequently does, in the Brahmaputra valley, the heart of the North-east, it is only natural that it should affect the neighbouring hill states. Disruption of supplies is a roblem the tribal states face frequently in prawling Arunachal Pradesh. The Governnent now has more to worry about.

The ethnic tension spilling over from Assam has got the administrators in the sparsely populated but strategic Union territory on tenterhooks. Last fortnight, the Government made a fresh appeal to the Centre for the speedy return of about 50,000 tribal refugees who had crossed over from Assam's Darrang and North Lakhimpur districts so that it could concentrate on maintaining peace on its own side of the border.

Chief Minister Apang: adamant

The massacres in Assam reduced to total insignificance a series of incidents in the Arunachal foothills not far from Gohpur in Darrang district. Over 400 houses of Chakma settlers were burnt in the Kokila-Balijan belt of the lower Subansiri district as frenzied Nishi tribals attacked them. If there were no killings it was because the attacking hordes failed to coordinate well, and the Chakmas managed to escape. But the 8,000 Chakmas in the Kokila-Balijan belt now live under constant fear of fresh attacks.

Unwelcome Settlers: The Nishis resent the presence of stateless Chakmas who were among the 3,002 families settled in Arunachal Pradesh after they were uprooted from the Chittagong hill tract in the wake of construction of the Kaptai dam over the Karnaphuli river there. They have no right to vote, get government jobs or to start a business. But they have been allotted lands —and this is what the local tribals resent.

Two other major Chakma settlements exist near Miao and Chowkham in Tirap and

TRIPURA

The Red Book

FACTIONALISM is to be expected in any political party. But seldom do rank and file come out in the open against a powerful leader, while they are still in the party. Yet that is exactly what has happened in the small north-eastern state of Tripura where Marxist Chief Minister Nripen Chakravarti had found himself the target of a virulent attack.

The attack has come in a book by Jiban Chakravarti, a prominent member of the Marxist-dominated Teachers' Front, that was released last month. That has become the centre of controversy in political circles in Agartala and is selling briskly in the city.

And no wonder. The book *Tripura Tirish Thekey* (Tripura, from the'30s to the '80s) is an undisguised broadside against party strongman Nripen Chakravarti, 77, who according to the book imposes his will on the organisation on every issue. Says the author Jiban Chakravarti, who is a government schoolteacher, "I felt that the criticism against Nripenbabu's manner of functioning had to be made open in the interest of the communist movement in the state. There are many in the party who are with me in this".

The major complaint against Nripen Chakravarti is that he has flung collective leadership to the winds. The dangers of such a situation according to the book were demonstrated during the Bengali-tribal riots in June 1980 when the army had to be called out to restore peace. The book says: "The June riots found a powerful organisation as the Communist Party flabbergasted. Since Nripen Chakravarti was not in town, there was no leadership to give any directions to the administration because the administration will not listen to anyone else. Can a personality, no matter how towering, be a substitute for collective leadership."

Trenchant Criticism: A large portion of the book is devoted to the performance of the ruling Left Front—an almost entirely Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) show—since 1977. But instead of lavishing praise on the Government it says that it has shown a strange reluctance to tackle the corruption which has permeated every section of the administration. In fact the book says in unambiguous terms: "There are in the CPI-M legislators and leaders who are known for their corrupt practices and yet no action is taken against them. Unfortunately in this state there is only one man, Nripen Chakravarti, who enjoys the sole authority of taking decisions even on minor matters, whether in the organisation or in the administration. The party has been kept in the background and this has inevitably resulted in over-dependence on the bureaucracy."

Nripen Chakravarti: personality cult

To drive home his point that Nripen Chakravarti has all along been an "individualist"—a major failing in the communist view—Jiban Chakravarti refers to an incident in 1964 when the Communist Party split. The organisation in Tripura, as elsewhere in the country, was then in disarray and Nripen Chakravarti proposed he would go on a hunger strike in protest against the Government's torture of tribals. The state committee objected but he was firm and said if the party did not back him he would go ahead on his own as an individual. Chakravarti went on hunger strike outside the secretariat in Agartala for several days. It was ultimately decided that he would end his fast if the party made him a formal request at a public meeting. Yet, the book points out that while the meeting was being organised, Nripen Chakravarti suddenly ended his fast on his own.

The timing of the book's publication has caused intense speculation. It is no secret that there is a strong tussle for the leadership of the Tripura unit of the CPI-M. Nripen Chakravarti's main rival for the job is Dasarath Deb, the state's first representative to the Lok Sabha. After the January elections Nripen Chakravarti had to yield to pressures and accommodate Deb formally as the deputy chief minister. Interestingly throughout the book there is no criticism of Deb. Jiban Chakravarti maintained that: "If the party wants to come down on me then large sections of the rank and file will rise in revolt." But by bringing out his book now he has undoubtedly stirred a hornet's nest.

—SUMANTA SEN in Agartala

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Lohit districts respectively. The domination of the Chowkham area by the progressive, Buddhist Khamtis has kept tensions in check there. But the enterprising Chakmas have generated strong antipathy among the native tribals in both Miao and Kokila-Balijan areas. The Government fears a recrudescence of the strong agitation it faced last year from the All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union (AAPSU) for the ouster of the Chakmas and Tibetan refugees settled in Lohit, Tirap and Kameng districts.

The Tibetans are safer because they are confined to their settlements in the predominantly Buddhist areas—the Monpas of Kameng have a lot in common with them. But the Chakmas, though they keep off politics, have shown signs of economic domination of the natives in Tirap district. This serves to fuel the anti-outsider feelings.

Tricky Problem: Congress(I) Chief Minister Gegong Apang admits that the Chakmas did not come surreptitiously into his territory, but insists that they be taken out and settled elsewhere. "This is an old problem and we can't wait for the Assam situation to stabilise before solving it. At least no fresh Chakmas have come in since the initial settlement," he says.

The Chakmas, the initial settlers who now number around 20,000, remain a worried lot. Said Devgun Chakmai: "If the Government wants to settle us elsewhere it should just push us back into Bangladesh, but with weapons. With the Shanti Bahini, we may carve out our own destiny." But that will surely not happen. And the Arunachal Government will yet again have to defuse tensions as shrewdly as it did last year in the wake of the AAPSU agitation.

MADHYA PRADESH

Tacit Pressure

THE SONS of politicians are beginning to make more headlines than their more illustrious fathers, though not necessarily of the desired kind. Last month it was the turn of Ajay Singh, son of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Arjun Singh, to figure in the allotment of land and loans to Electrical Transformer Company (ETC) in which he is a partner.

Ironically, the issue became controversial only after the chief minister himself referred it to the Lokayukta as part of his "effort to create an atmosphere of probity and impartiality in the multifarious activities of the Government". He requested the Lokayukta, former chief justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, V.P. Dixit, to find out if any partiality had been shown to the unit. Dixit, in his 11-page report, gave a clean chit to the concerned authorities.

Favours: The matter had its origins in a simple question raised in the state Assembly by Bharatiya Janata Party legislator Babulal Gaur, on March 3 this year. Gaur wanted to know if in the area set aside for the Bharat Cooperative Housing Society, land had been allotted to ETC. He also asked for the names of the company's partners. The answer given was interesting.

Ajay Singh: in the news

Apart from Ajay Singh and his wife Bina Singh, one of the partners is J.S. Walia. His name figured prominently in the Chiklod affair two years ago when the Government had come under severe attack for the alleged leakage of the Madhya Pradesh Non-agricultural Land Ceiling Ordinance. Weeks before its promulgation, the Begum of Bhopal, Sajida Sultana, divided her 2,200-acre private forest in Chiklod, near Bhopal, in favour of 23 buyers who got the land at the extraordinarily low price of approximately Rs 125 per acre. Each of the new owners got just under 100 acres—the figure laid down by the new ceiling. So strong was the criticism that the Government was compelled to bring an amendment which effectively covered the Chiklod deal.

Rapid Disposal: In the current case, Arjun Singh referred the matter to the Lokayukta on March 13. Dixit, who says that the probe was "exploratory in nature", submitted his report in less than a month. The matter was disposed of in quick time because, according to Dixit, the files at his disposal gave a clear picture "so as to make oral examination of any witness superfluous".

While Dixit found no trace of the use of influence at any stage, his report shows up the unusually rapid progress of files. The application for land was made on October 22, 1982; it was approved by the District Industries Centre on October 26; a letter of intent was issued on October 30; on November 21, 1982, a lease-deed was executed for the 24,000 sq ft plot. The company took possession on the same day. Total time taken: 30 days.

Finance took slightly longer. The company made an application for a loan of Rs 10.34 lakh on January 17, 1983. According to the Dixit report: "The application was complete in every respect....It was after the Financial Corporation (the Madhya Pradesh Financial Corporation) had made full range of standard enquiries and obtaining income tax clearance certi and opinions of banks as regards the c tworthiness of the partners of the firm the matter of grant of a loan up to Rs lakh was put up...." On February 25, the board of directors resolved to san the loan. Time taken: 39 days.

Irregularities: Dixit has dismissed objections of the housing society as "unt ble". According to the report, while th ciety was formed only in 1975, the Go ment had already acqu 730 acres of land in the for industrial use som years earlier. "It app that, when a map delinea land reserved for indus purposes and land for r dential purposes was pr red, an error crept in," Dixit; the error being the land allotted to the minister's son for indu was marked for reside use.

The error, incred enough unnoticed for s ral years, was promptly set right follo objections from the society. It was rect on February 9, 1983 by an order of the H sing and Environment Department to speed things up for the entrepreneurs. T is one vital question, however, that the p does not answer. How could land be allo to the company before the error was r fied?

There is another matter which may become the focus of a fresh controver the coming months. While certifying the as legitimate, Dixit remarks: "The veiled barrassing innuendo against the chief m ter contained in that part of the question by Shri Babulal Gaur which enquired a the names of the partners of the compa entirely without foundation."

Gaur, the bespectacled advocate, sides that this remark is uncalled for. A says irritably: "As a legislator, do I, or not, have the right to raise matters that concern the public? This remark is an at not only on my privilege but also on th the speaker with whose permission the q tion is admitted."

Says an entrepreneur in Bhopal: pressure comes on files. An official s knows what to do with a case pertainin the chief minister's son: remove all s Legally, everyone might be in the clear; b only illustrates that things get moving o you are someone—or related to some Show me one case without clout where formalities have been wrapped up quickly." —SREEKANT KHANDE

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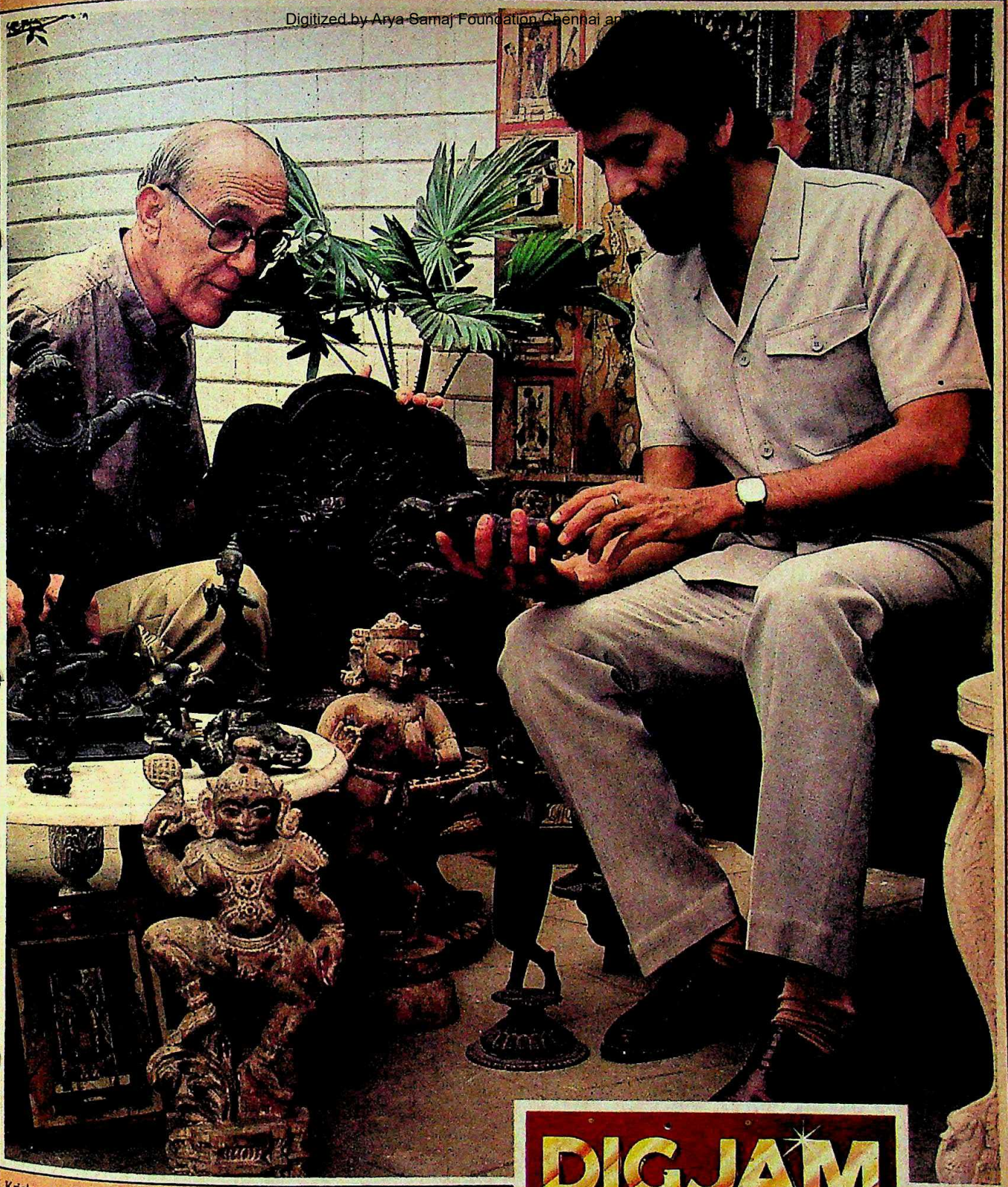

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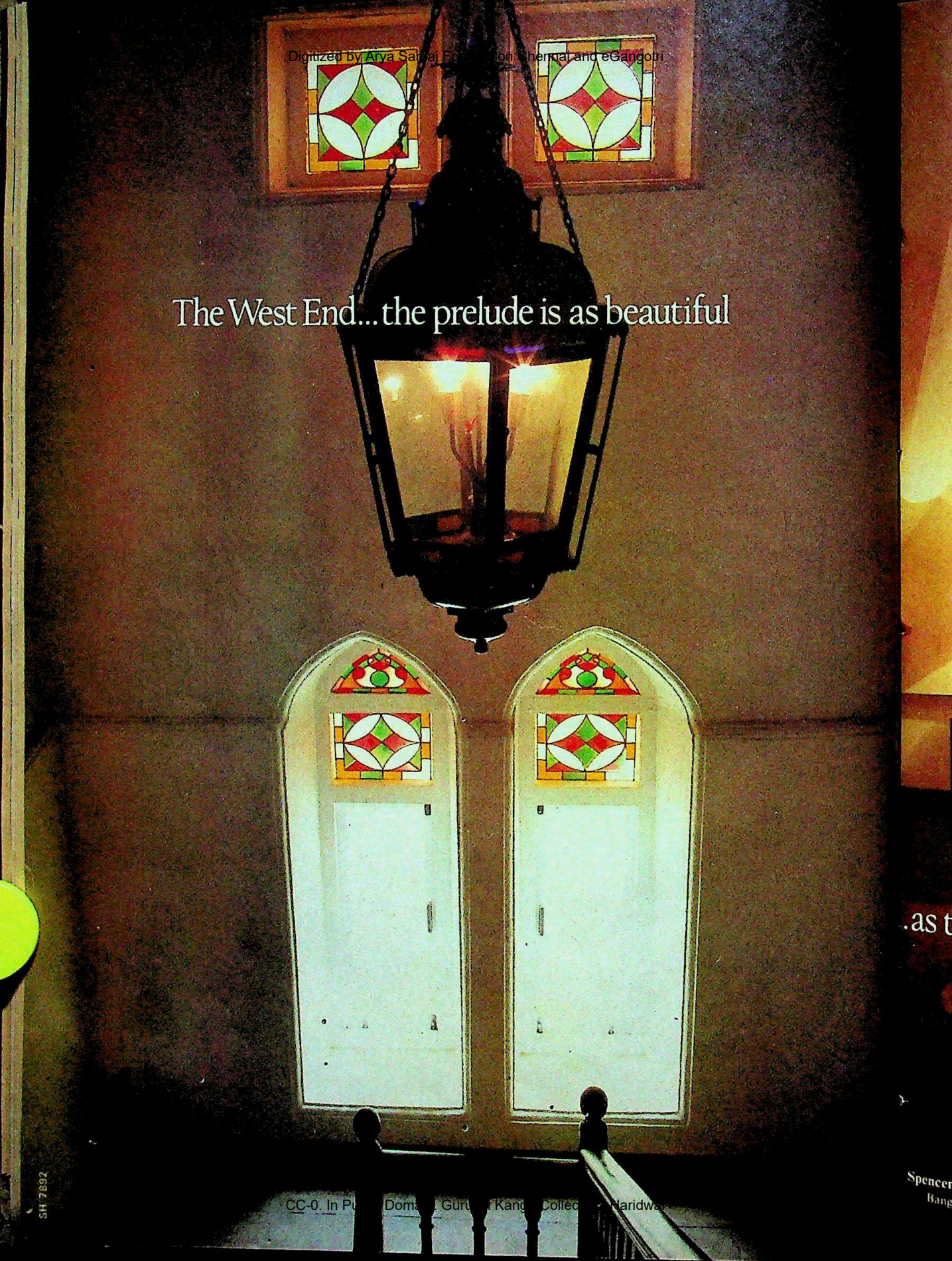

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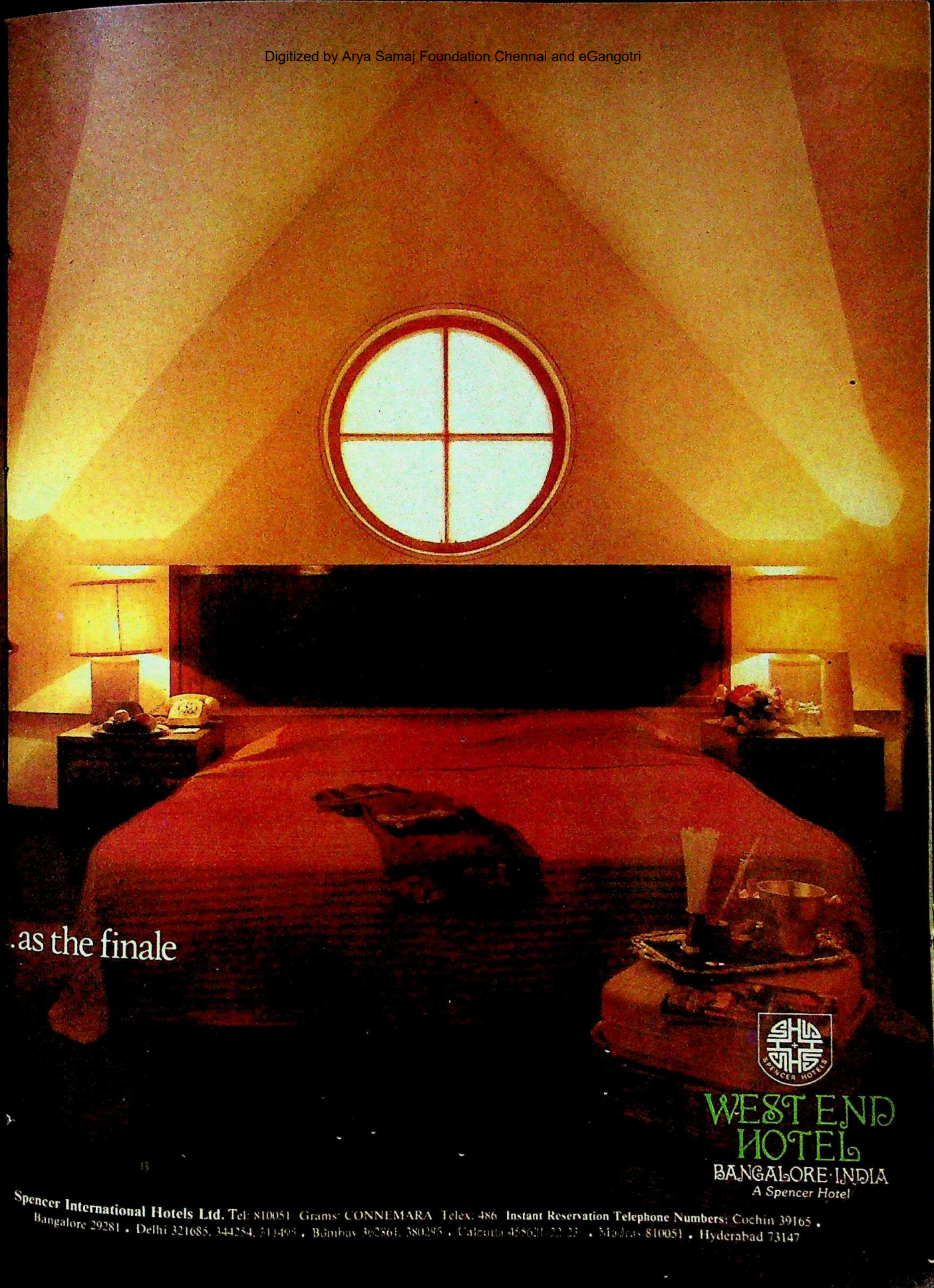

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C(I)

outh Power To The Fore

MRS GANDHI is girding herself for trying times ahead. Last fortnight, the Indian Youth Congress-I's C-I) 40-member National Council unanibusly adopted an amended constitution hich made Mrs Gandhi by name—instead the All India Congress Committee-I CC-I) president—the life chairperson of its ntral Youth Advisory Board (CYAB). The AB which was earlier an independent body charge of IYC(I) affairs, responsible to the CC(I) has now been made an integral part the IYC(I).

This significant move, which isolates e IYC(I) from the overall disciplinary conol of the AICC(I), underscores the possibility her relinquishing AICC(I) presidentship. It ikely that greater political reliance is going be placed on the IYC(I), which has been ore aggressive in defending the Congress(I) adership than any of the Pradesh Congress ommittees (INDIA TODAY, March 31).

The proposed amendment, which has en hanging fire since 1976, was given its al form by a six-member committee aded by Ramchandra Rath, Union minisr of state for chemicals and fertilisers, hich included K.B. Pannicker, joint secrery AICC(I), Anand Sharma, general secrery IYC(I), Arif Mohammad Khan, Union nister of state for agriculture, Murali andare, senior Supreme Court advocate d Ghulam Nabi Azad, Union deputy nister for law and company affairs. Subtted before the National Council on the e of the IYC(I)'s massive New Delhi rally on ril 13, the amended constitution was opted after a long 10-hour discussion. otable participants in the parleys included CC(I) General Secretary Rajiv Gandhi, th, Arun Nehru, MP, IYC(I) President riq Anwar, all five IYC(I) general secreies and state-level functionaries.

Altered Constitution: In an important parture, the new constitution makes the AB an integral part of the IYC. The shift in restructuring of authority is unambious. Now it is Mrs Gandhi in her personal pacity, and not as AICC(I) president, who ll appoint CYAB members. Earlier the airman of the CYAB alone was the member the National Council. Now there will be associate members of the National Counwho will be nominated by the IYC(I) presint "with the approval of the chairman of CYAB". In order to accommodate these mbers for whom the age limit has been re- ed to 40 years, the number of elected mbers has been reduced from the earlier to the current 10.

Even the removal of the IYC(I) president has been made more difficult. The quorum for moving a no-confidence motion against the president has been raised to half the total elected members of the National Council against the earlier requirement of one-fourth. Further it can be carried only by a two-thirds majority as against the simple majority stipulated earlier.

These drastic alterations in the IYC(I)'s democratic structure have been defended by office-bearers on the plea that the organisation will now be more cohesive and functional. Asserts Anwar: "There is nothing wrong in making Mrs Gandhi the life chairperson of the organisation. It was she who kept the IYC flag flying during the Janata regime when the then senior Congress leaders dubbed our organisation as irresponsible. Only under Mrs Gandhi's protective umbrella and leadership does the IYC feel secure and work with dedication and purpose." Adds Sharma: "Ever since Rajivji took over the responsibility of youth affairs, we have been able to expand our base by attracting more people. And Mrs Gandhi's association with it will make our organisation more credible and responsible."

That cannot be denied. Ever since Bangalore session in 1982, the IYC(I) has been ahead of its parent organisation. By holding padayatras, training camps, rallies and constituting watch-dog committees to implement the prime minister's new 20-point economic programme, the IYC(I) intends to oversee all the nation's 370-odd districts. The high command has acknowledged its debt by sanctioning the IYC(I) new spacious offices at 5, Raisina Road, New Delhi, where a Rs 1 crore Jawahar Bhawan is to be built. In addition, the IYC(I) has been assured of liberal finances for building up its state-level units. Says D.P. Roy, IYC(I) general secretary in charge of its training cell: "Our objective is to prepare an army of committed youth who are not meant for slogan-shouting demonstrations, but who will be able to fight the Opposition politically because our thrust is now on ideological training."

Rajiv Gandhi (second from left), IYC(I) President Tariq Anwar and office-bearers at the National Council meeting: significant moves

Reflecting this new vigour, the new constitution of the IYC(I) states that it will work towards "the realisation of a secular, socialist, democratic Republic as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and as incorporated in the Constitution of India during Smt Indira Gandhi's tenure as Prime Minister". For a politician who doesn't take chances when it comes to the control of political organisations, Mrs Gandhi's preference for the IYC(I) seems to indicate that, at a crunch, she can no longer rely on the old guard.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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HIMACHAL PRADESH

Money Down The Drain

HIMACHAL Pradesh's Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh has had a rude initiation into the state's murky politics. The new Government finds itself haunted by a Rs 25 crore scandal involving the Irrigation and Public Health Department (I&PH), which has resulted in unused stocks of galvanised steel (GI) pipes worth Rs 16 crore and high density polythene pipes worth Rs 1.65 crore. The purchases which were made between 1981 and 1983 are under investigation by the Accountant-General's Office. Charged the state's Irrigation and Public Health Minister Sant Ram, 55: "After going through the records, I have no hesitation in admitting that the pipes purchased were more than the actual requirements. It is a criminal wastage of public funds. We are looking into the circumstances under which orders for these pipes were placed."

Charged the state's Irrigation and Public Health Minister Sant Ram: "After going through the records, I have no hesitation in admitting that the pipes purchased were more than the actual requirements. It is a criminal wastage of public funds."

The procurement drive began in May 1980, after Harish Chandra Malhotra had taken over as engineer-in-chief and secretary of the state's Public Works Department (PWD) in an unprecedented, consolidated charge which combined both the administration and implementation departments into one post. His wife, Usha Malhotra, a Congress (I) Rajya Sabha MP, is a member of former chief minister Ram Lal's faction in the party. Malhotra's department prepared a detailed scheme for augmenting the drinking water supply in the state's 7,600-odd problem villages under the Minimum Needs Programme of the Sixth Five Year Plan. The proposal was subsequently routed through Rangila Ram Rao, chief parliamentary secretary in charge of public health, to Ram Lal who then held the public health portfolio.

Hurried Approval: Since the project was undertaken on an emergency footing, the Government decided to purchase pipes on contract rates approved by the Director-General of Supplies and Disposal (DGS&D). Orders for GI pipes worth Rs 8 crore were placed with 20 firms which, however, delayed the delivery due to the shortage of steel during 1980–81. At the end of that financial year, the state was left with unused GI pipes worth Rs 5.1 crore and an earlier unused stock of polythene pipes worth Rs 48 lakh.

Despite being saddled with these huge outstanding stocks, chief engineer I&PH P.K. Sarkar in Malhotra's department decided to place a fresh order for GI pipes worth Rs 12 crore with 20 firms in 1981–82. Significantly, the order, which was placed on the basis of existing DGS&D rates without inviting fresh tenders, did not take into account the glut in the market induced by the liberalisation of the Government's import policy regarding steel strips. According to the state's Finance Department, if the PWD had invited fresh quotations, it would have saved at least Rs 5 crore due to the easy supply situation. The bulk of these orders went to three firms—Zenith Steel Pipes & Industries Ltd, Bombay (Rs 5 crore); Jindal Pipes Ltd, Delhi (Rs 2.79 crore); and Indian Tube Company, Calcutta (Rs 2.75 crore).

In addition, polythene pipes worth Rs 1.20 crore were also purchased in the same financial year. Prominent among the suppliers of these were two local companies—Chemplast Industries, Parwanoo; Premier Plastic Pipes Industries, Nalagargarh; and Gautam Plastics & Industries, Bilaspur. Consequently, at the end of that financial year the balance stocks mounted up to a total of GI pipes worth Rs 12.90 crore and polythene pipes worth Rs 1.65 crore.

Nevertheless, in the two months of April and May 1982, without any request from superintending engineers for more pipes, a fresh order for GI pipes worth Rs 3.90 crore further boosted the worth of unutilised stocks to Rs 16 crore. This was done despite protests from the Finance Department, by the new chief engineer, Munna Lal Bansal, who was appointed in December, 1981 following Sarkar's death. With state Assembly elections due in June 1982 and Malhotra's impending retirement in August 1982, the timing of this hasty decision was significant. Despite complaints by dissident Congress (I) leaders to the high command and questions by opposition MLA's in the Assembly, the issue was deftly declined.

Ineffectual Action: In May 1982, Rangila Ram, who was leading a campaign for Malhotra's ouster, became the state PWD minister. Despite repeated reminders to concerned officials, he was unable to unearth the files pertaining to the GI pipe purchases. However, since drainage and irrigation schemes had been neglected in favour of these, he banned all fresh purchases. When Lal failed to ascertain the correct stock position from the I&PH department, he directed Mrs C.P. Sujaya, Malhotra's successor as I&PH secretary, to take action. Censuring chief engineer Bansal in a letter dated November 6,

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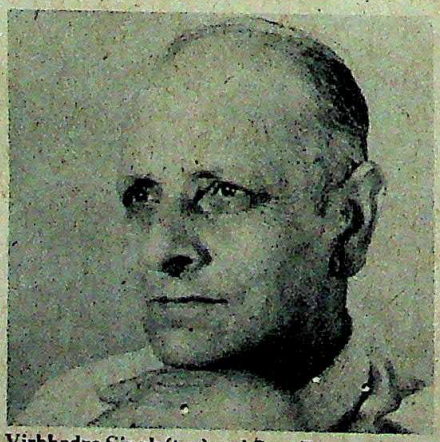

Virbhadra Singh (top) and Sant Ram: probing serious charges

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jaya said: "You were of the opinion that der the present circumstances, neither the paration of division-wise lists of inventos by November 15 nor the monthly reports changes in the inventory control is feasi-." She directed Bansal to compile the entory position by calling a meeting of perintending engineers. However, she was iftly transferred to the Planning Depart-nt in December, and replaced by Attar gh.

Meanwhile, preliminary investigations the state Accountant-General's office yield important irregularities in the whole al. It observed that PWD norms had been ntravened by the purchases which were in cess of the requirements. While governent rules for inviting fresh tenders for supying material in each contract were violad, leading to payments which were 10 per nt higher than the prevailing prices in 82-83, 4 to 6 inch diameter pipes worth Rs crore could not be used at all since they re unsuitable for Himachal Pradesh where all villages don't exceed 100 houses each d require narrow diameter pipes. Again, ally unsuitable polythene pipes were ught despite past experience of their being maged by villagers in the hilly terrain and earlier decision to avoid acquiring them.

THOUGH the Accountant-General's Office has been able to scrutinise only 15 of the 27 existing divisions, accordg to the state's Vigilance Department, all divisions were supplied pipes which were er 300 per cent more than their requireents and the funds were adjusted against eir budgets. Said Himachal Pradesh eputy Accountant-General A.K. Awasthi a letter to chief engineer Bansal dated pril 6, 1983: "During inspection of the machal Pradesh PWD, it was seen that in divisions, 8,24,325m of GI pipes valuing 300.64 lakh were lying unutilised. In addin, GI pipes worth Rs 109,07,245 were purased in excess of the requirements sent by e I&PH division, Dharamsala. We, therefowant to review the manner in which requiments of pipes purchased during the last ree years were assessed by your departnt before placing supply orders."

Even the state's 20-point programme plementation committee, headed by the ief minister, was bewildered when it found at the state Government would not be able achieve its target of supplying drinking ter to all the 7,600-odd villages by 1985. spite a staggering expenditure of over Rs crore, the state has covered only 2,700 vilges because money meant for labour, ent and other work was spent on pipes.

Not surprisingly, the new I&PH Minister t Ram has not been able to lay his hands the original proposal under which the purchases were initiated. As per the records, it was Sarkar first and then Bansal who placed orders on various companies. While Sarkar is dead and Bansal is unwilling to talk, it is clear that no purchase could have been made without the approval of Malhotra who was then engineer-in-chief.

Malhotra, however, denies having ever ordered the over-purchases. Says he: "It was Sarkar who was dealing with the purchases. The files never came to me for approval. In fact, I put my foot down when a file for purchasing pipes came to me." But Malhotra cannot explain why he did not stop the purchases when on December 31, 1981, the I&PH department brought to his notice the Rs 14 crore worth pipes lying in the stores of the department. "I don't have the records with me now. Please ask the state Government," he says.

HARI OM GULATI

BHAGWAN SINGH

(From top) Sukh Ram, Malhotra and Ram Lal: a murky affair

State Inquiry: The state Government is, in fact, investigating the matter from March 1980 onwards, when Malhotra was appointed engineer-in-chief by the then chief minister Lal. Malhotra was earlier mentioned in A.C. Gupta's report on the Maruti Commission for ordering Maruti road rollers for Himachal Pradesh during Lal's government in the Emergency days. Questioned along with other officials involved, Malhotra, who was then I&PH chief engineer, alone had exonerated the political leadership from any blame and taken personal responsibility for the decision. Out of favour during the Janata days, Malhotra's fortunes made a comeback with the Congress(I)'s return to power in 1980. Not only was Malhotra elevated to engineer-in-chief in March 1980, his wife was nominated to the Rajya Sabha as MP in May of the same year.

The state Government has also launched an investigation into the assets and properties acquired by various PWD officers during their service in the state. On the top of their list are Malhotra, Bansal and six other superintending engineers. Malhotra and his family members own property in which they had invested Rs 8.5 lakh.

Meanwhile, five months after his retirement, Malhotra has been appointed chairman of the Rs 150-crore Engineering Projects of India despite opposition from the Industry Ministry. Notwithstanding the prime minister's February 1983 directive that all officers reappointed after retirement should be retired, he continues to hold office. In Himachal Pradesh, however, the new state Government has already begun taking action against controversial officers of the I&PH department. In his first administrative order after assuming office, Chief Minister Singh replaced I&PH chief engineer Bansal by G.N. Ramaswami who had been superseded by both Bansal and Sarkar during Malhotra's tenure and had filed a writ petition in the Himachal High Court challenging the decision. Justice Hira Singh Thakur's subsequent judgement, delivered in January 1983, indicting Malhotra for his bias and ordering Ramaswami's reinstatement, had been ignored by the Ram Lal ministry. No further action is likely until the state Government is able to conclusively pinpoint responsibility for the huge stocks of pipes that currently fill all the warehouses of the Himachal Pradesh PWD.

—PRABHU CHAWLA in Simla

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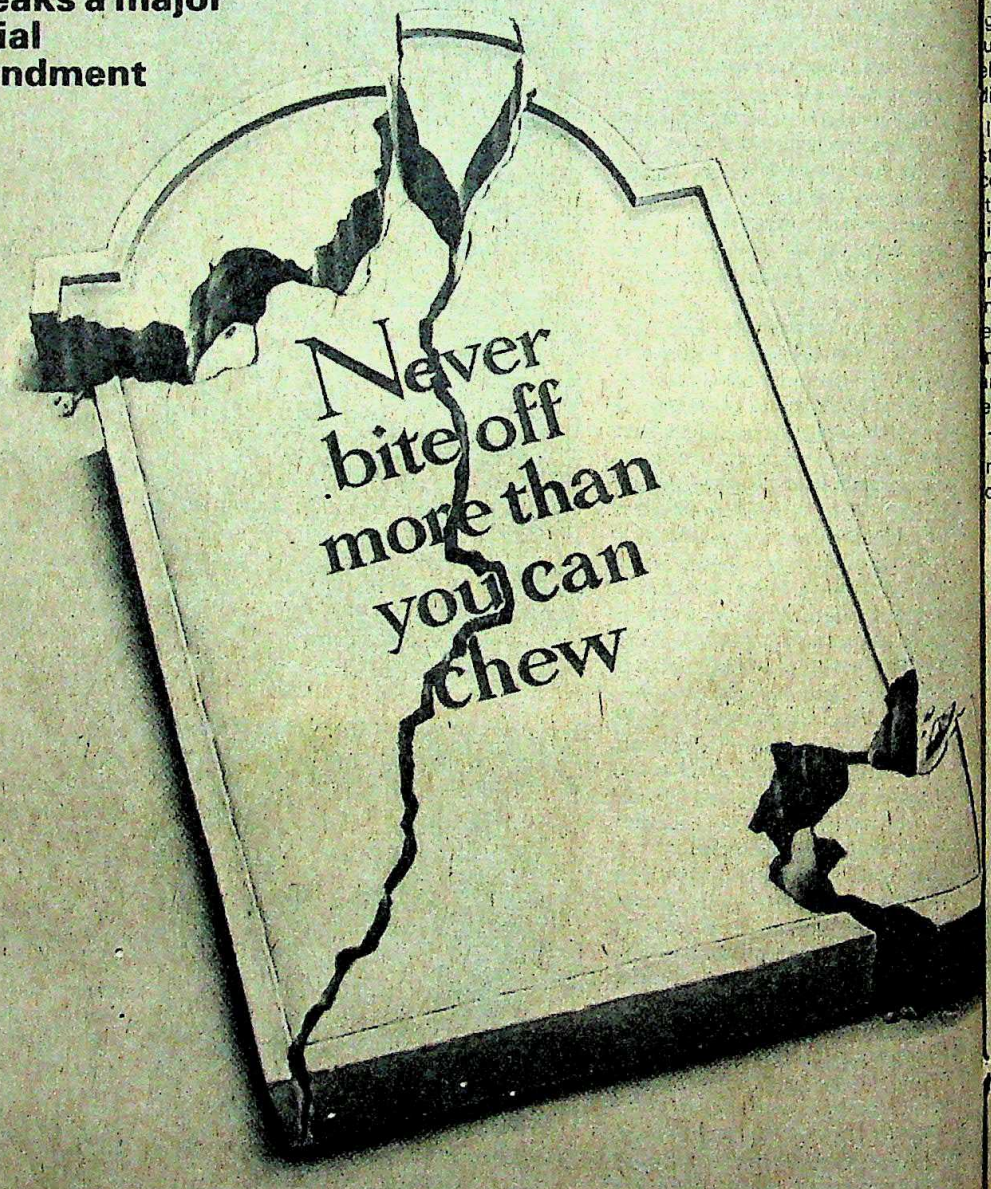
KEC breaks a major industrial commandment



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Strange as it may sound, our success KEC and the total confidence of our stomers derive in some measure m the fact that we dare to take on allenges when everybody else opts . And we deliver, no matter what the oblems.

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In the first phase of the Rajasthan omic Power Plant, Canadian General ctric supplied 300 kVA no-break nsets in 1965.

For the second phase, the Department Atomic Energy, or DAE for short, cided to launch a major indigenization ogramme. When they floated tenders the critical no-break gensets, not a gle Indian manufacturer of electrical uipment responded. The uniform ling was that nobody, but nobody in dia could make them.

It was at this point that the Indian stitute of Science, Bangalore, commended KEC for the job. DAE got touch with us at KEC and asked our ief Design Engineer to meet their nsultants, Montreal Engineering mpany, and talk things over. The nsultants were understandably ptical about our capabilities. The only ndition on which they were willing to rt a dialogue with us was to escalate e stringency of the specs.

The specs for the 400 kVA no-break nset required that the equipment ould be highly reliable and suitable for continuous operation on a 24 hours per day basis. The genset could be shut down only on a planned basis once in 4 months. The loads connected to the high reliability Class II bus fed by these MG sets were very critical in their input requirements and so it was necessary to hold the steady state voltage and frequency variation within 1 percent of the set values. The transient specifications permitted were also extremely severe since a water pump driven by a very large induction motor had to be started without significant disturbance to the other connected loads.

The deal was on. We quoted and DAE gave us the go-ahead. We worked hand in hand with DAE. Their experience and constructive suggestions were invaluable. We pulled out all the stops and worked round the clock. The problems were many. Often we wanted to throw up our hands in despair. For instance, when one of our prestigious British associates on other projects took a look at the severity of the tolerances of the genset, they recommended that we should use a frame size suitable for a generator 5 or 6 times the capacity of the 400 kVA no-break genset. We decided to use our own brains and experience. We designed a 600 kVA frame for the application.

We supplied the first set in 1975. All checks were carried out to DAE's total satisfaction. On D-day, DAE pushed the button. And did our no-break genset live happily ever after? Sorry, this is not a fairy story, it's for real. When the set started rotating, the control system tripped. The set came to a halt. The redeeming feature was that the protection system had worked after all.

Within three months, with DAE's help, we re-designed the entire control panel. This time around when the button was pushed, the set went beautifully into action. It's still going great guns. Of course, there were minor teething problems. As a matter of fact we still continue to make improvements with DAE's active co-operation.

DAE have placed an order for 4 no-break gensets for the Madras Atomic Power Plant. In 1980, we won the order for four 325 kVA sets and 8 55 kVA control power supply sets for the Narora Atomic Power Plant in the teeth of stiff German competition. And, in 1979, DAE asked us to supply them two sets of 150 kVA for one of their research projects. To date, no other Indian manufacturer has entered the field.

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BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

Looking Inwards

THE BUOYANCY with which the party's plenary session at Bombay ended two years ago was missing. As Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) members sat down to a three-day national council meeting in Delhi last fortnight, their mood was decidedly subdued and introspective. In 1981, party workers had confidently chorused: "*Pradhan mantri agli bari, Atal Behari, Atal Behari*" (Next time Atal Behari Vajpayee will be prime minister). But now, shaken by the Delhi poll defeat and an only passable showing in elections in the south, party delegates were more restrained in their claims. General Secretary L.K. Advani put it bluntly: "We are not yet a national alternative to the Congress(I), but we have the potential to become that alternative." And M.L. Khurana, the Delhi BJP secretary conceded: "Bombay was an impressive and disciplined show of strength which brought a ray of light in a then very gloomy political scenario. We forgot that we still have a long way to go."

In his general secretary's report for the years 1981 to 1983 Advani admitted: "The two years under review may not add up to the big leap forward which some were expectantly looking forward to after Bombay. It must be conceded that considering the rapidity with which the ruling party has been collapsing, our own pace of growth has been inadequate." He said that politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum and to that extent if genuine opposition parties cannot fill this developing vacuum, it is bound to be filled by regional parties and breakaway groups of the Congress(I).

The party has, however, added a few feathers to its cap. Membership has increased from 2.2 million to 3 million. The BJP has completed elections to nearly all district committees and is moving southward to dispel the impression that it is confined to the north. In the 100 Parliament and assembly by-elections since June 1980, the BJP gained two more seats in the Lok Sabha and six more in assemblies than it started out with. And the national council, the highest policy-making body of the party with representatives from each state, concluded with a call from party President A.B. Vajpayee to take up integrated rural development programmes. The watchword for the year, "Go to the villages", is aimed at reducing the party's identification with the urban middle class.

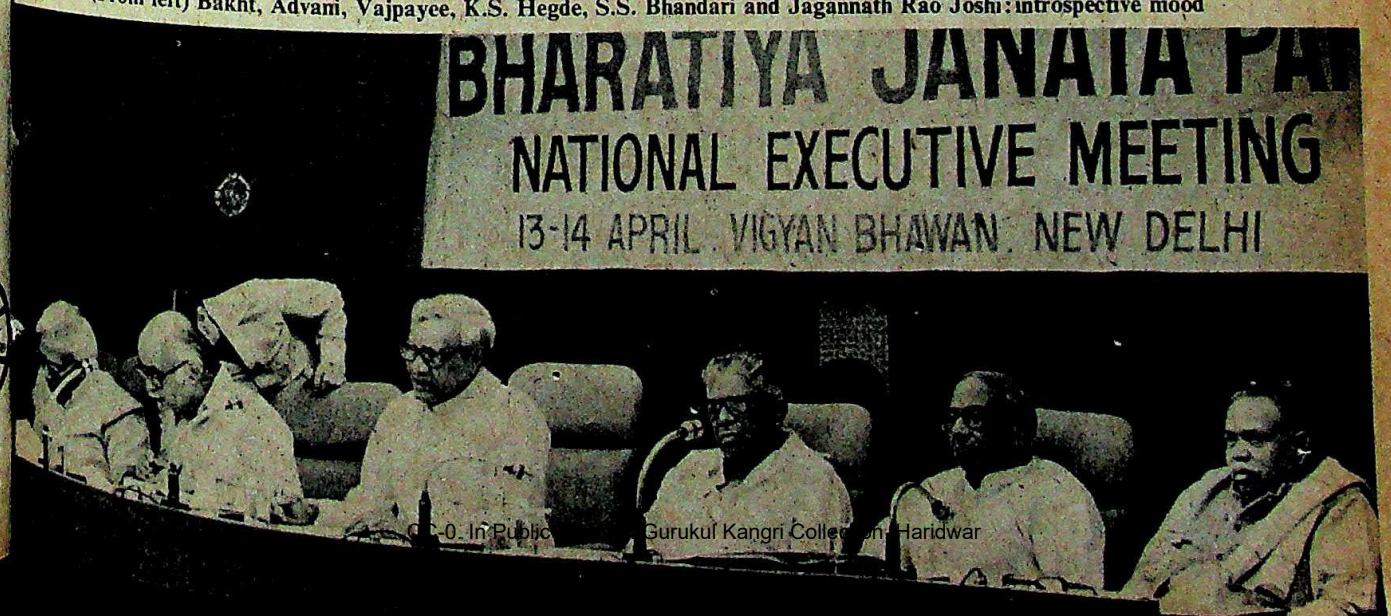
Controversial Front: But what was of overriding concern to the council was Vajpayee's emotional plea for the formation of an anti-Congress(I) national democratic front that would include anti-communist and nationalist forces. The suggestion was that the party should move away from its isolationist 'going-it-alone' stance and head towards a repeat performance of 1977. Vajpayee was convinced that a mid-term poll was in the offing—"When Mrs Gandhi says there will be no mid-term poll, experience has shown us that the opposite proves true," he said—and extended the party's hand in friendship to all nationalist democratic forces. He visualises a coalition government at the Centre after the poll. Although there was outright hostility in the party ranks to any suggestion of a merger, Vajpayee emphasised that while merger, for the moment, was ruled out, it need not be so for all time. "Nothing is sure in politics," he concluded.

The Opposition's response to Vajpayee's call for a front was lukewarm. Janata Party President Chandra Shekhar demanded that the BJP first spell out its relations with the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) and secularism. He also said that if the front was to become a reality, the communist parties would also have to be approached. Chandra Shekhar was sceptical if the BJP as a whole, in fact, wanted such a front. Unfazed, Vajpayee continued to emphasise the need for a front. "What has Chandra Shekhar to do with our ties with the RSS?" he asked and added that he favoured including regional parties such as the Telugu Desam. A national democratic front would have a minimum programme and a common campaign but not a common symbol.

Chandra Shekhar's not-so-enthusiastic response provided considerable satisfaction to the BJP hardliners opposed to any comprehensive electoral adjustment on a countrywide basis, because they thought it smacked of the disastrous Janata experiment. A majority of the party, in fact, favoured electoral alliances with the Lok Dal instead of a broad-based front. Although the BJP has not fared well in its electoral adjustments with the Lok Dal in Haryana and Delhi, many BJP workers feel that the two parties complement each other. The Lok Dal's rural base can be capitalised on by the BJP particularly in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

On the other hand, the Janata Party and the BJP are contenders for the same constituents and the recent elections, where the two parties clashed, have left their scars. Although Advani attempted to make clear that *tal-mel*, as the delegates referred to adjustments, did not amount to merger, the BJP delegates were not convinced. "How can we have electoral talks with people like Subramaniam Swamy and Raj Narain?" asked one speaker. "It is always we who are expected to make the sacrifices," complained another.

Growing Rift: Despite the general reluctance towards the front and the bitter opposition from the RSS hardliners. Vajpayee was



(From left) Bakht, Advani, Vajpayee, K.S. Hegde, S.S. Bhandari and Jagannath Rao Joshi: introspective mood

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able to get his way. This was both his personal triumph and an indication that the RSS lobby does not necessarily hold sway in key issues of the party. Public acceptance of the front proposal was preceded by a bitter wrangle behind closed doors at the party's national executive meeting held two days before the council session. Former party treasurer Murli Manohar Joshi called for the consolidation of national forces to make the front a reality.

Joshi's resolution was shot down by hardliners J.P. Mathur and *Organiser* Editor K.R. Malkani, who insisted that it amounted virtually to a merger. Vajpayee-backers and moderates such as Ram Jethmalani, Yagya Dutt Sharma, K.L. Gupta, and Bhairon Singh Shekhawat continued to harp on the front theme. P.N. Lekhi suggested that the controversial issue that was causing considerable embarrassment be referred to the national executive rather than be thrashed out at the council meeting in the glare of publicity.

A chagrined Vajpayee hit back in pointed references to the party's defeat in Delhi. He blamed not the party's workers but the leadership for its complacency and "all those of us who are at the moment sitting on the dais". It is perhaps significant that all the party's resolutions were moved by moderates lined up with Vajpayee. Though Advani normally puts forward the political resolution, it was moved instead by Jethmalani and seconded by Shekhawat. The BJP's economic resolution, normally moved by Bhai Mahavir, considered the party's economic expert, was proposed by Satish Agarwal and seconded by K.L. Gupta.

Dampened Enthusiasm: Having made the front a prestige issue, Vajpayee finally got his way. Advani, personally close to Vajpayee, but ideologically more in tune with the hardliners told INDIA TODAY: "The front is the party's national policy from now on. And coming from me who, according to the press, is opposed to the front, this should be taken as a fact. The front is a step forward from the party's resolution in Surat on electoral adjustment."

Other members of the national executive are, however, more pessimistic about the significance of a front. Hardliner Mathur insists: "The front is a mere reaffirmation of the Surat resolution; we keep our separate identity. It is only a difference in wording. The question of electoral alliance will be s later." Said Yagya Dutt Sharma, a moder who has recently been dropped as the par general secretary: "It looks like a dra change but frankly speaking it is noth new from what we stood for earlier. If i was our thrust then why was it dropped fr our political resolution? How long can we on with this political untouchability? have to accept realities."

The infighting within the party w according to one of the moderate member sign of a healthy democratic trend and p of the give and take of any political par Others were of opinion that it reflec rather the growing indiscipline of a cad based party rapidly changing into a ma based organisation and the loosening hol the RSS. The truth probably lies somewh in between.

Differences within the party surfac once again with the announcement of t new national executive. Advani becomes t only general secretary although there w four earlier. One discorded general secreta Sikandar Bakht from Delhi publicly refus to accept the party vice presidentship wh he was offered as a sop. —COOMI KAPO

CHANDIGARH

Market Forces

THE CHANDIGARH administration is finding itself in one scrape after another over controversial land allotments. A few months ago it was facing criticism for allotting industrial plots to VIPs and their relatives. Now it has to endure another barrage of criticism for granting commercial land to an influential group of cloth merchants—the Chandigarh Wholesale Cloth Merchants Association—for a wholesale cloth market.

Unfortunately for the administration the rumpus began almost as soon as the allotment was made. The Opposition was quick to allege that the agreement was not above board. They claimed that lakhs have passed from the cloth merchants to the ruling Congress(I). Even a few Congress(I) members, surprisingly, publicly opposed the agreement. Two executive members of the Chandigarh territorial Congress(I), G.C. Garg and Inderjit Bahl have also written to P. Venkatasubbiah, the Union minister of state for home affairs demanding that the allotment be cancelled and a CBI probe ordered.

Strong Opposition: But the strongest opposition to the allotment has come from a rival group of cloth merchants—the Capital Wholesale Merchants Association. The Capital Association promptly filed a suit in the Punjab and Haryana High Court demanding that they should also be allotted plots in the new market. Acting on the petition the high court has stayed the allotment till the matter is decided.

For the Chandigarh Association the decision has come as something of a blow. The allotment of plots represents the culmination of years of lobbying. Besides this there is no denying that they are getting a bargain. The administration has auctioned 54 plots measuring over 150 yards each. In recent sales land in the area has been selling at Rs 6,000 per sq yard. In nearby Sector 34 some plots have been selling for as much as Rs 7,800 per sq yard. Despite this, however, the estate office decided that land for the new cloth market should sell at Rs 2,300 a sq yard. As a result plots which should have fetched about Rs 9 lakh ended up selling for Rs 3.45 lakh. On this estimate the Government will lose nearly Rs 3 crore.

The cloth merchants have had their eyes on the plot for several years. Each chief commissioner has recorded his "sympathy" with their case for a wholesale cloth market. However, the administration has been reluctant to sell the land at the reserve price. During the rule of the Akali Dal-Janata government, the administration had offered the merchants land in Sector 40 on condition that it should be publicly auctioned among them. The association declined the offer.

Renewed Lobbying: With the return of the Congress(I) the cloth merchants renewed their lobbying. Their efforts met with fair success—almost at once the Government postponed plans to auction the land. Sources in Chandigarh say that the present Union Minister of State for Law and Company Affairs Jagannath Kaushal intervened on their behalf. Kaushal is also said to have pushed their case at a later stage. Baldev Raj Gulati, the president of the Chandigarh Association admits openly: "But for Kaushalji we would have been still knocking at the doors. He first got the auction stayed and then got us this site."

Chandigarh's Chief Commissioner Krishan Banarji justifies the allotment on the plea that Chandigarh also needs a wholesale cloth market to boost business. But his administration has added to the controversy by losing the original file on the matter. The Assistant Estate Officer R.P. Chadha has recorded that, "main file is not available and the allotment is on a 'puc'—paper under consideration—only." With the original papers missing it will be very difficult for anybody to prove mala fides.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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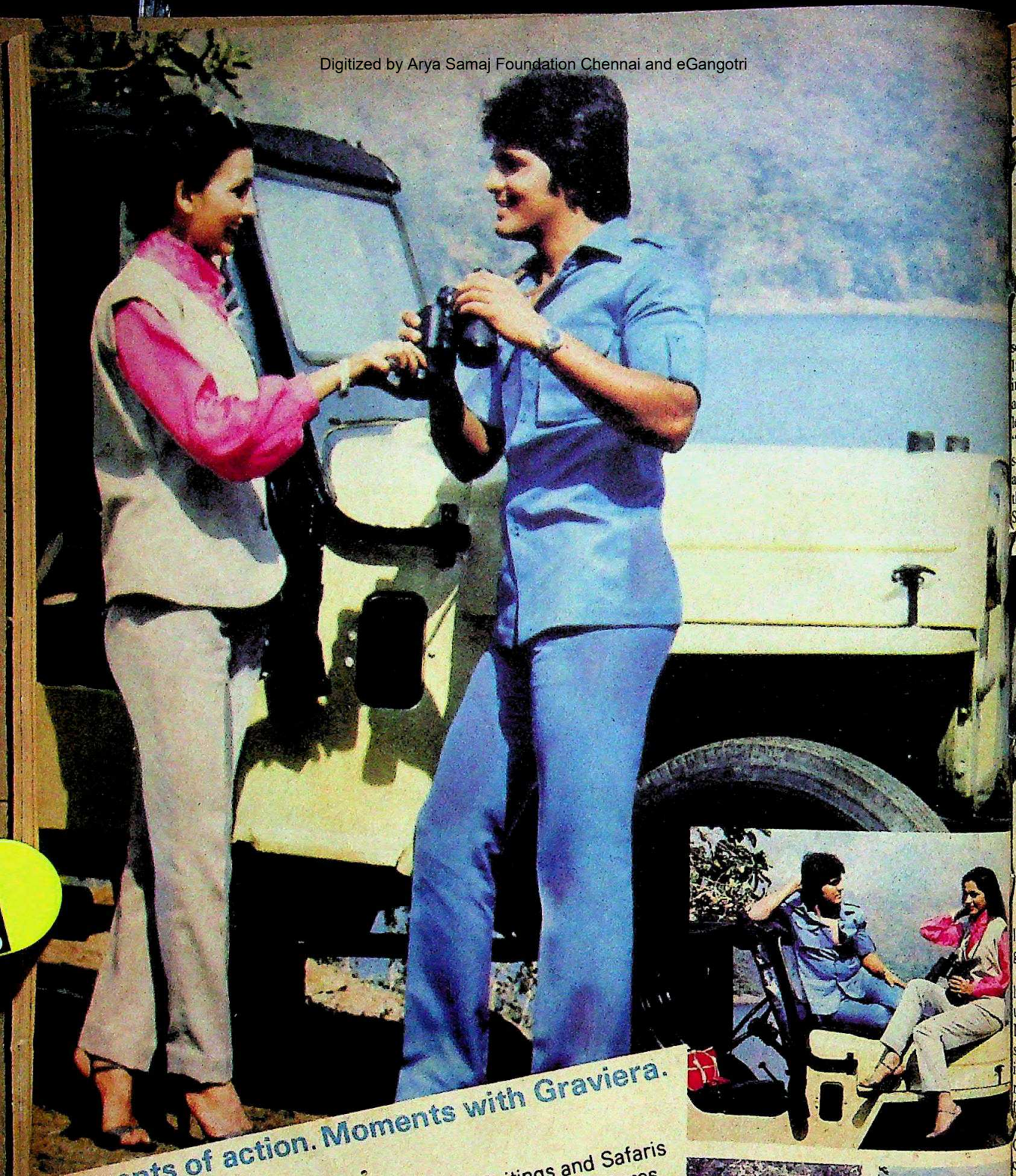

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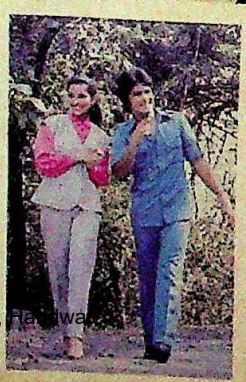

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RAJASTHAN

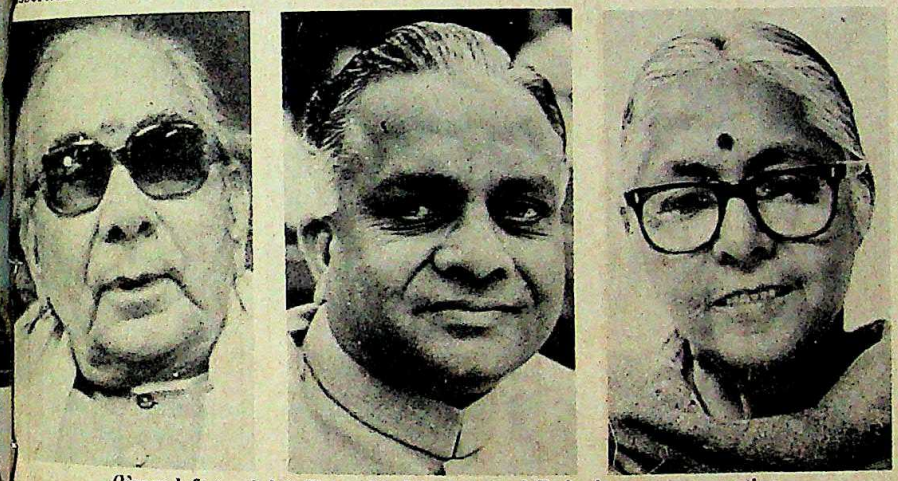
Timely Reprieve

THE RESCUE operation could not have been better timed. Last fortnight, Rajasthan Chief Minister Shiv Charan Mathur received much needed relief from mounting dissidence and scandals (INDIA TODAY, March 31) when All India Congress Committee-I (AICC-I) Working President Kamalapati Tripathi brushed aside rumours of an impending change in leadership during a visit to Jaipur. Said he: "Why should there be a change? We are fully satisfied with the working of the ministry and there is no dissatisfaction against it in the state." This reaffirmed AICC(I) General Secretary Rajendra Kumari Bajpai's earlier assertion that no change in the Rajasthan leadership was contemplated in view of its good performance.

These assertions undoubtedly demoralised the dissidents—whose number has gone up to 90 in the 143-member Congress(I) Legislature Party—but they could not win support for the Mathur Government. Even in the Rajasthan Congress(I) workers' meeting which Tripathi had come to address, four of the six speakers made critical speeches. Their accusations were that the Government was dominated by the bureaucracy, that Congress(I) workers were ignored and that the Government had failed to tackle the drought situation affecting two-thirds of Rajasthan's 2 crore population. Only one speaker lauded Mathur's Government for its revolutionary scheme of taking the administration to the villages.

If Mathur expected a standing ovation from over 1,000 workers present, his hopes were completely dashed. Instead the dissident workers descended to fist fighting and Pradesh Congress Committee-I (PCC-I) President Ram Kishore Vyas had to suspend two Youth Congress (I) activists and issue charge-sheets against two other party workers to restore the peace. Even Tripathi, a veteran of scores of Congress(I) meetings during his 50-year political career was moved to lament: "There is no Congressvad in the party today. There is only chavannivad (money power)." His outburst, however, was drowned in the slogan-shouting for and against the chief minister.

Pre-empted: In fact, both the pro- and anti-Mathur groups had planned to outnumber each other in the meeting to drive home their popularity. A week before the meeting, anti-Mathur workers led by the threesome comprising former chief ministers Jagannath Pahadia and Hardeo Joshi and former PCC(I) chief Girdharilal Vyas had a secret meeting which over 50 MLA's are believed to have attended. A detailed charge-sheet against Mathur's Government was prepared for handing over to the high command in New Delhi. However, Tripathi's public support to the Mathur Government pre-empted the Opposition. Admitted a dissident Congress(I) MLA: "What is the use of giving memoranda to a person who has pre-judged the whole issue before even studying it? We will continue to fight from within."



(From left to right) Tripathi, Mathur and Bajpai: rescue operation

Meanwhile, Mathur maintained a low profile during the visits of both Tripathi and Bajpai. When asked to comment on the Mathur *hatao* campaign launched against him, he said: "They should concentrate on solving the grave problems confronting the state. The Congress(I) workers can help the Government in tackling many problems which bureaucracy has failed to do."

Mathur also tried to placate dissidents by assuring them that he would constitute a coordinating committee comprising government officials and Congress(I) workers for implementation of the prime minister's new 20-point economic programme. In the past, such committees have proved to be useful levers to grant political favours. In addition, Mathur did not press for the replacement of those MLA's, who are currently chairmen of various state public sector undertakings, with his own men. In fact it is these MLA's who have been in the forefront of the anti-Mathur campaign.

Revitalisation: If Mathur's concern was to keep dissidents on the defensive, Tripathi's main objective was to involve Congress(I) workers in party work which would indirectly diminish dissidence in the party. Accepting his advice, the PCC(I) decided to hold five two-day conferences for division-level workers at Ajmer, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kota and Bikaner every month. In addition, the PCC(I) also decided to convene a meeting of all the elected representatives of panchayati raj institutions and municipalities, on the pattern of the Lucknow convention of gram pradhans held on April 23. A women workers' meeting will also be organised. Either Prime Minister Indira Gandhi or an AICC-I general secretary are likely to address these meetings, along with other Central leaders.

But the rejuvenation of the party is not expected to yield any tangible results. Abandoning public defiance soon after Tripathi's departure, dissident MLA's have started a signature campaign against Mathur, which they will submit after collecting 100 signatures. During her one-day visit to the state, Mrs Gandhi was also informed about the Government's failure on many counts. Mathur's position has also been weakened by his inability to reshuffle his Cabinet and drop controversial and pro-dissident ministers, something he has been promising to do since October 1982. Ever since he took over in July 1981, Mathur has been allowed by the high command to reshuffle his cabinet only once, in October 1981, when he dropped two ministers and inducted seven new ones.

According to pro-Mathur Congress(I) leaders in the state, half-a-dozen ministers are actually leading the campaign against the chief minister and even supplying confidential official records to opposition leaders to fuel criticism against the state Government. Admitted a Congress(I) leader: "We are victims of our own culture. When Congressmen have no one to fight, they pull down their own government to prove their political strength."

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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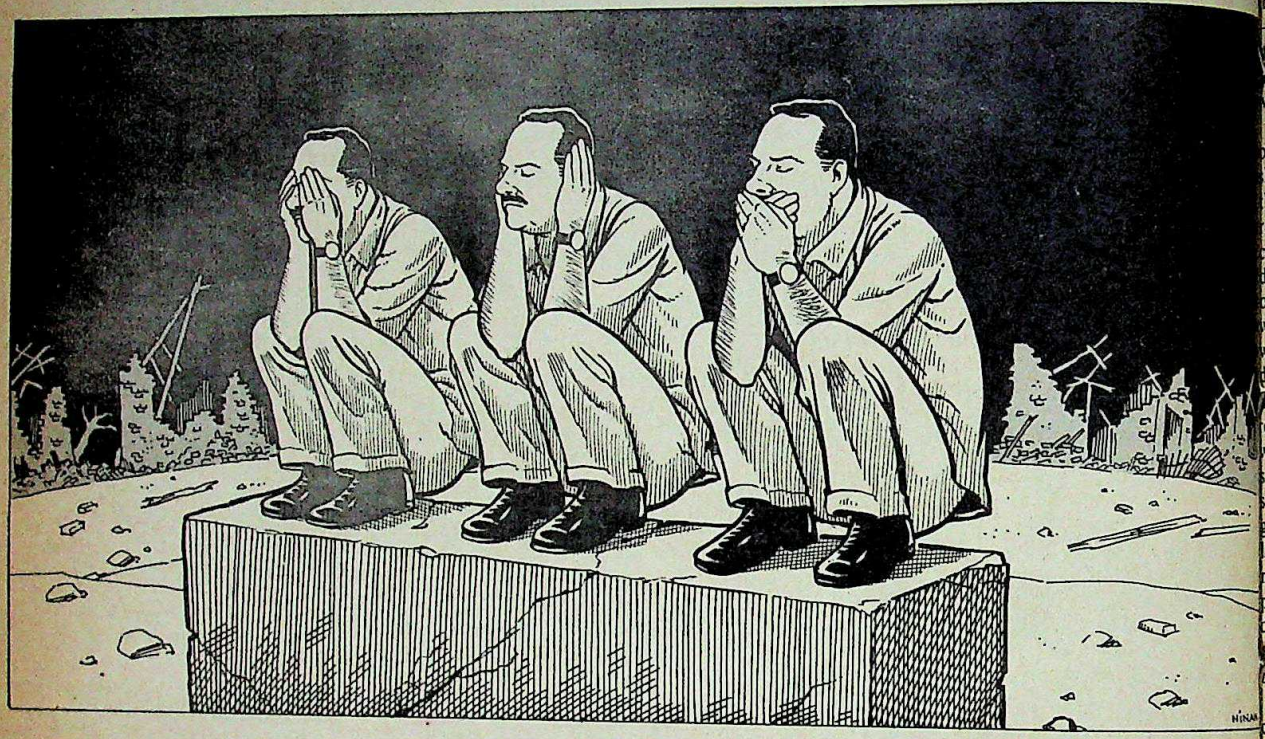
ASSAM ELECTIONS

COME WHAT MAY



THE NELLIE massacre of February 18 in the middle of the Assam elections was only one, certainly the worst, of many during that bloody period. Yet it stunned the nation as none of the others. From the beginning, when scattered news reports began to trickle out to full length magazine features spelling out the terrible tragedy in gory detail, INDIA TODAY *was among the first to report the story, and its feature (March 15, 1983) revealed the true horror in pictures and words for the first time.*

Yet the story remained incomplete because it was buried deep in the secrecy of government files, now protected even more zealously by a bureaucratic machinery seeking alibis and scapegoats. So when INDIA TODAY *learned that Magsaysay Award-winning journalist and author* ARUN SHOURIE *was gathering material for a book on movements such as the one in Assam, it decided to publish his findings. Shourie turned up the most devastating evidence on the Government's handling of the rising violence in Assam during that black February. His report:*

BY MARCH 1982 Mrs Gandhi's efforts to instal a Congress(I) government in Assam had finally fallen through. Her first nominee—Anwara Taimur—had fallen in six months. Her second—Keshab Gogoi—had fallen in two.

The High Command, as it is called, concluded that a Congress(I) ministry just could not be formed with the existing Assembly. A new Assembly was the only way out.

The electoral strategy of the party was the familiar one: isolate the largest group; gather together the other groups; foment insecurity in them; and then present yourself as the only available protector.

A single device was available for isolating the largest group, for dividing the people sharply, as well as for fomenting insecurity in the target groups: the electoral rolls should not be purged of the names of non-Indians. Purging these names had become a matter of principle in the entire Brahmaputra valley and so, if you could only ensure that the elections would be held without rectifying the rolls, everyone who could effectively oppose you would boycott the elections; half the task would thus be done without any other effort. Second, intelligence report after intelligence report assured you that, should you ram through an election without rectifying the rolls, violence would be the certain consequence; the violence in turn could only heighten insecurity and fear among the target groups. Third, it was also evident, as it was so reported, that a "firm stand" on this issue would be a sufficient signal about who was the only available protector, who was the only buffer between the target groups and deportation; and so, once you had taken a "firm stand" on this issue it would not be difficult to convince large enough numbers that the only way to avoid eviction would be to vote for the Congress(I).

And so the decision was: "Election yes; but elections at all costs without revising the rolls".

The Coterie

For ramming this sort of an election through the Government needed a pliant election commissioner (whom it soon appointed) and a few men on the spot who would just shut their eyes and ears and go through the motions. To lead the latter corps

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e the Government had R.V. Subrahmaian, an officer who had proven his usefulss to the rulers by helping with the cleaances for Maruti.

Soon after the imposition of President's Rule in March 1982 and his appointment as the principal advisor to the Governor —in effect, that is, as the ruler of the state—Subrahmanian set about the task of ramming the elections without-revisions through.

Meetings were held from May onwards to this end. Officers who showed the slightest reluctance to go through with whatever may be required were put out of harm's way. A commissioner who put his misgivings down in writing was forced to proceed on leave. A deputy commissioner who, in response to a query about what he would do if a situation developed in which people's lives were unsafe had said that he might then resort to the part of the Act under which he could cancel the poll, was swiftly shunted to the Secretariat. A small coterie of the select soon emerged: R.V. Subrahmanian, S.L. Khosla, the chief electoral officer, a commissioner, two inspectors general of police and an all powerful, unheeding deputy commissioner. There were several others who helped, of course, but they were the cogs.

Members of this coterie, in particular Subrahmanian and Khosla, frequently visited districts to let everyone know that going through with the elections one way or another was all that mattered. Whenever their attention was drawn to the violence and disruption that were certain to occur once the people had been provoked in such a manner, they were told (and explicitly so, I learn from them) that law and order was secondary.

Once the elections were announced on January 7, 1983, this process of acculturating everyone was institutionalised through a Security Coordination Meeting. The meeting began at 4 p.m. every day. About 30 officers attended it.

It was a monologue every single day. Subrahmanian would invariably begin with the chant: "Elections must be held come what may, the flag must fly." He would then proceed to recite what had been done the previous day, what the priorities were for the day. All discussion was blocked off. After February 4 almost the entire time would be taken up by his narration of the requisitioning of polling personnel, of arrangements for looking after them, of where they would be sent and how etc. Even as the state burnt, Subrahmanian etc. dedicated themselves to trivia, to ritual.

Setting The Stage

The stage for a total breakdown, for a war of all against all, began to be set the moment it became clear that Mrs Gandhi had set her mind on elections.

R.V. Subrahmanian, principal advisor to the Governor

THE Security Coordination Meeting began at 4 p.m. every day. About 30 officers attended. It was a monologue every single day. Subrahmanian would invariably begin with the chant: "Elections must be held come what may, the flag must fly."

The earliest exercises that were done of what was liable to develop once the elections were announced indicated that the people would be so enraged that violence would be the certain consequence. Consider the report sent by the superintendent of police (SP) Dibrugarh on July 3, 1982, to the inspector general of police (IGP), Special Branch (the part of police that deals with domestic intelligence) in response to his queries:

* * *

Office of the SP, DSB, Dibrugarh.

Secret

MEMO NO. DSB XIV/1/82

129/Dibrugarh 3rd July 1982.

To,

The I.G.P., S.B.
Assam, Kahilipara, Gauhati.

Subject:— Assessment on situation if the general election is held.

Ref:— Your Memo No. SB. 11(A)/ 62-A-82/ Vol-IV/ 216 dt. 21.5.82.

Sir,

With reference to above, I am to inform you that the matter was discussed in a meeting of the Circle Inspectors of this district on 26.6.82. The Gazetted police officers were also present in the discussion.

It was the opinion of the officers based on field experience that holding of the election after negotiated settlement of the foreigners issue will not be very difficult. But holding of the same without such a settlement may be quite difficult. Such an attempt will be strongly resisted by the organisers of the agitation. They may succeed in creating large-scale lawlessness.

(He next analyses the relative strength of different groups, the forms that violence will take as the election process proceeds and so on. He then comes to the final questions.)

(v) Any remedial measures like shifting of the booths from and to any particular location etc.

There were about 1,100 polling booths in the last general election and on a close study of the location of the polling booths it is observed that those are all located in schools/colleges/panchayat offices/T.E. clubs, having no scope for shifting to safer zone. As such it would not be of much help.

(vi) Proposed pattern of deployment of police boothwise and districtwise that you may think necessary.

Election without mass participation is meaningless. If government decide to hold election, an armed section will have to be deployed under one UBSI at each polling booth. Besides, each Assembly constituency will have to be divided into a number of sectors and each sector will have to be covered by adequate number of foot patrols, mobile patrols and VHF. Each Assembly constituency must be put in charge of a Dy. S.P. Sufficient striking force will be necessary at each P.S. and other strategic points. Army will be required to stand by.

It is suggested that election without a negotiated settlement may not be held.

SP, DSB, Dibrugarh * * *

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In August 1982, an exercise was carried out on the basis of such assessments and some mechanical rules of thumb to estimate how many men would be needed for protecting the booths etc; the total requirement came to 120 battalions. You can gauge the enormity of what was thought necessary by recalling that the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has only 76 battalions in all.

Now, it was felt that if the Governor and his Principal Advisor Subrahmanian went to Delhi and requested 120 battalions they would be taken to be saying that they in effect could not hold the elections. And so, rather than brand themselves with a stigma, they had the estimated requirement scaled down to 65 battalions.

Next, the incessant insistence of Subrahmanian & Co as well as the bosses in Delhi shut off channels that conveyed inconvenient opinions. At last, much to their satisfaction, they began receiving the reports they wanted.

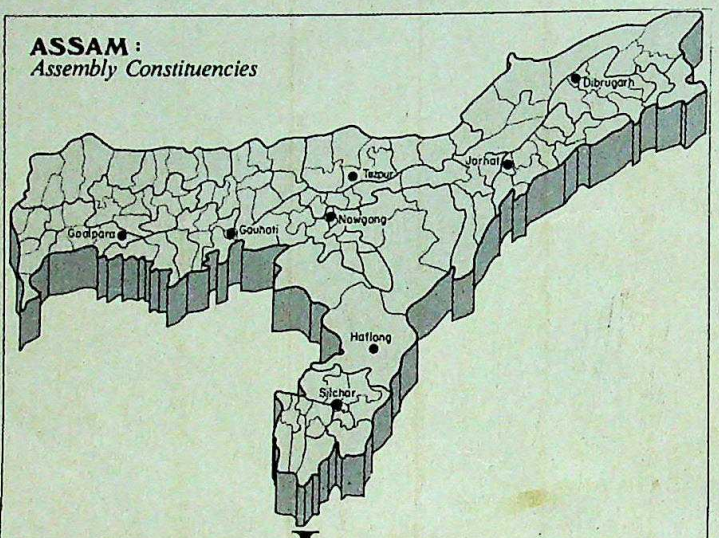
Intelligence Assessments

Thus, in the very first exercise in July, both the Intelligence Bureau and the Special Branch had stated that in 30 constituencies alone—of the total of 126—could elections be held in relative safety. But the question soon changed. From being in effect "in how many constituencies can we hold elections as we know them?" the question became "in how many constituencies will we be able to complete the electoral process?"—that is, "in how many will we be able to complete the rituals associated with elections?": 78, said the Special Branch!

Later still the question was taken by all to have changed again. From being "in how many constituencies will we be able to complete the rituals associated with elections?" in effect it became "in how many will we be able to proclaim one way or another that the ritual of elections has been completed?": 105, said the Special Branch.

But that even going through the motions would entail large-scale violence was still being put on record by the intelligence agencies. What they were now doing was to convey the data in more palatable forms: being even more vigorous in denouncing the movement leaders, conjuring up the Rashtriya Swyamsewak Sangh (RSS), making elaborate lists of "counter-measures" that would be immediately necessary and, after each forecast of violence, adding that nonetheless "elections can still be held".

Thus the one-and-a-half-inch-thick assessment of the Special Branch (No. SB XI (A)/SPC/20/82/Pt. IV/94) delivered by hand to Subrahmanian on November 20, 1982 lists the prospects of violence etc in area after



LATER still the question was taken by all to have changed again. From being "in how many constituencies will we be able to complete the elections?" in effect it became "in how many will we be able to proclaim one way or another that the ritual of elections has been completed?": 105, said the Special Branch.

area (the assessment is boothwise) and ends with a ten-point "counter-strategy": the poll to be held in three clusters, maximum available force including Home Guards etc. to be inducted, "all-out alert to the army as reserve force" .... "total ban on the All Assam Karamchari Parishad and the All Assam Central and Semi-Government Employees Parishad" etc. Then the equivocation:

> In approximately 78 constituencies, the election can be held where the voting is likely to be between 30 per cent to 65 per cent of the total electorate while in the remaining constituencies where large-scale troub are anticipated the voting will be anything between 1 per cent to 30 pe cent. On the whole, election can be held most of the constituencies with prope planning and preparation despite violence and resistance from anti-elect forces.

The assessment report of January 1 (No. SB IX (A)/SPL/5/82/83/42) recapi lates the ever-growing incidents of violen says that "their (that is, movement leaders') failure stir up mass agitation made them more desper and they are likely to step terror tactics" (it then give list of what is likely to ha pen as each stage of the el toral process is ramm through), that they a "adopting an action pr gramme having strong vi lence potential", that "t RSS elements have been ho nobbing with the extrem elements of the AASU" a that "the RSS link-up wi the agitation may lead communal conflagration it repeats that "there is po ibility of communal violen in vulnerable areas. Link- of RSS elements and the ag tation at many places indic te a strong possibility much communal disturba ces in sensitive pockets j prior to the election or i mediately after the ele tion", that "available info mation indicates that t agitators will not be able build up resistance in a ma scale but incidents of viole ce would increase as the po ling dates draw nigh (Don't worry about the analysis, just see the pr spect they are pointing towards.)

And then there is the ritual obeisanc "Despite the attempts of agitation and extr mist elements to create anarchy, the over- law and order situation in the state is st well under control. This is mainly because the failure of the agitators to enlist mass pa ticipation towards the agitation in rece months ...." And at the end a "conclusion in which everyone can read what he want "It was earlier indicated that in approxima tely 78 constituencies election can be he and in the remaining constituencies there likelihood of large-scale violence. The asse sment still holds good. However, despite v

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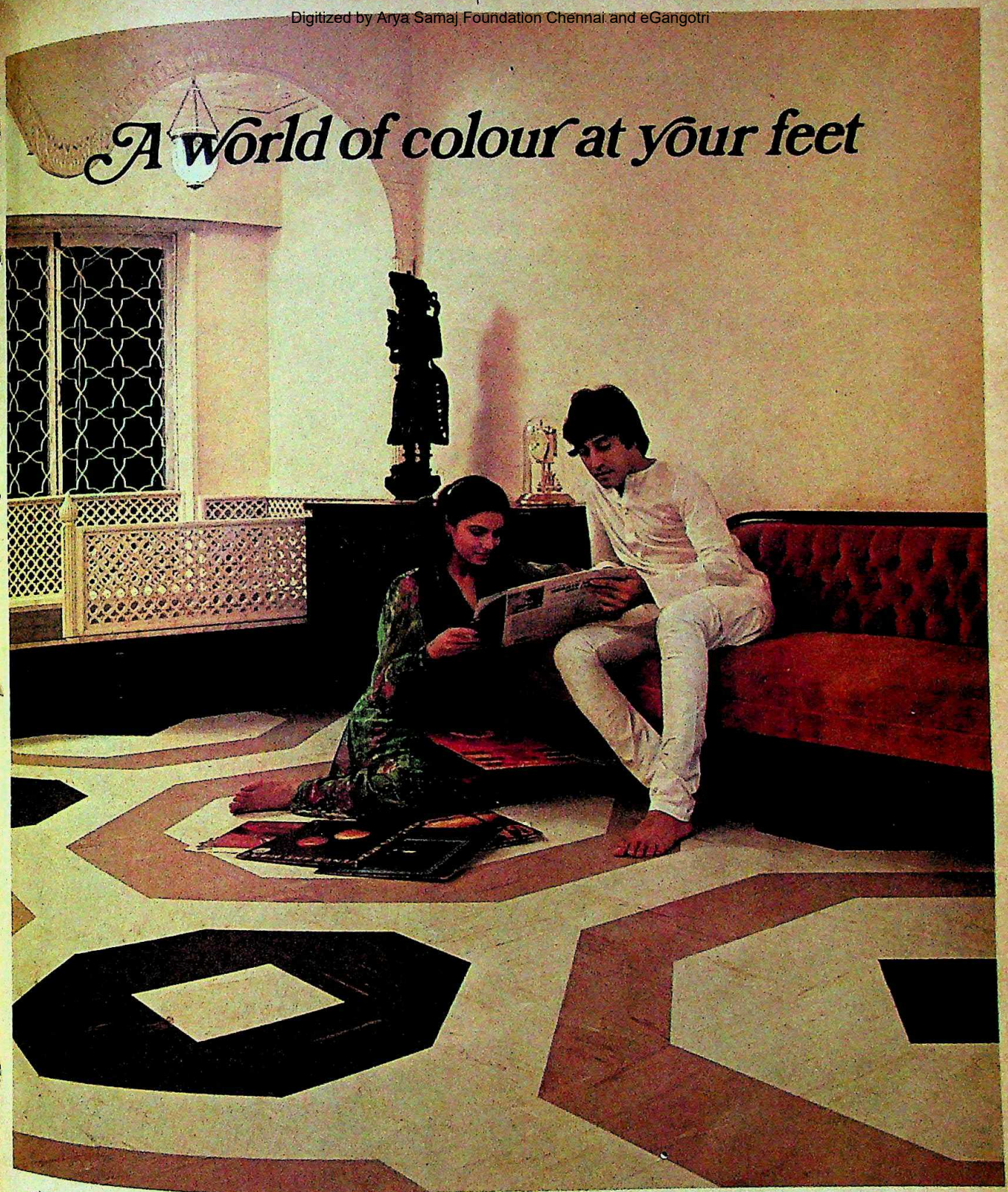

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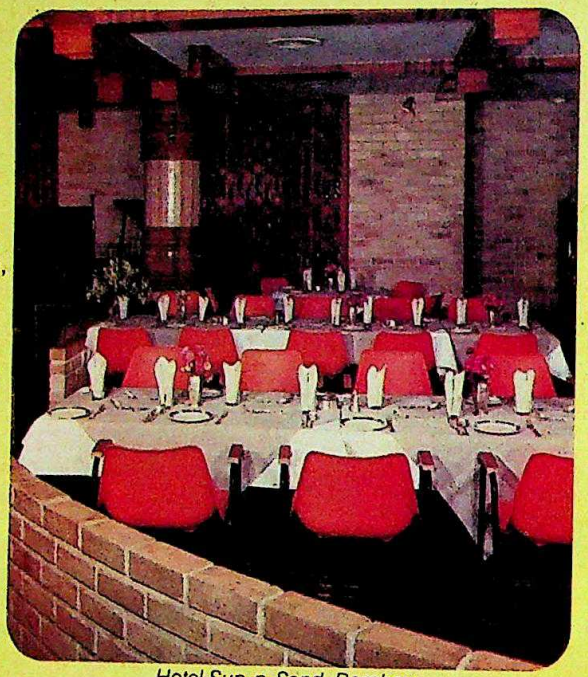

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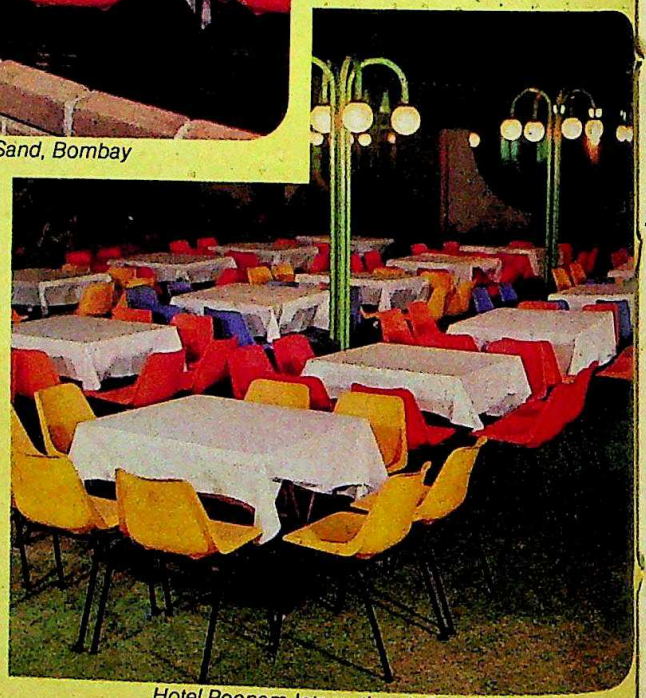

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lence and stiff resistance election can still be held in all the constituencies with proper planning and preparation."

The Intelligence Bureau notes followed a similar strategy: convey your apprehension that violence is imminent but do so in the language they want to hear, do so in language that shows you are clearly on their side. Quoting the documents at length would be repetitious. Here are two representative passages from the "secret" briefing note prepared by the Bureau in end-January on the eve of the visit of senior Home Ministry officials to Assam:

> With the completion of filing of nominations, scrutiny and withdrawal by candidates, a very crucial phase of the election process in the State is over. The ability of more than 600 candidates to file their nominations has made the agitators desperate which has been manifested in various acts of violence directed mainly against the candidates, their supporters and Government property....
>
> The Muslim communal parties in the State appear to be happy in view of large number of nominations filed by Muslims including from Congress(I) and LDA. In view of the call for the boycott of elections by AASU/AAGSP, they expect comparatively larger turn out by Muslims to vote compared to Assamese. This would mean victory to larger number of Muslim candidates. The pressure of the agitators has till now been directed against the Hindu Assamese living within their areas of influence while the Muslims living in the minority pockets have been relatively free from such pressure. This is likely to generate communal feelings. There was some communal tension in the Mangaldoi Sub Division after the murder of a Muslim by some suspected Assamese. The RSS leaders have asked the candidates to cooperate with the agitators in their 'non-violence programmes'. In the incident at Kampur (Nowgong-Jan. 19) 2 RSS leaders had taken part in instigating the mob to attack the police. The growing unhealthy interest shown by the RSS, to instigate the Assamese Hindus and the possibility of involvement of Muslim communal parties to ensure victory of their supporters holds potentials of large scale communal violence especially in the districts of Nowgong, Darrang and Kamrup. The activities of RSS therefore, need close watch particularly in Nowgong and Cachar districts where they have strong base. Strict watch has to be maintained on the communal situation in the State particularly in Goalpara, Nowgong, Darrang, Kamrup and Cachar districts if major outburst of communal carnage is to be prevented.

BIJAYA SINGH

THESE Situation Reports (SITREPS in Bureau parlance) were often interspersed with editorial comments: the violence is taking on a communal and ethnic colour, things have deteriorated to an extent that "walking out is an act of bravery", what has been a relatively peaceful movement is in the process of being pushed into becoming a secessionist movement, the "coercive poll" will mark "the beginning of insurgency".

More important than these editorialised warnings, the actual facts about what was happening were throughout reported scrupulously by the Special Branch and the Bureau. In January and February the Bureau's Gauhati-Shillong-Delhi teleprinter line relayed data and reports literally 24 hours a day. Every report of killings, arson, group clashes, refusal of government servants to help in an illegal election etc was duly received here in Delhi. As days passed and the tension reached a boiling point a standard format was devised for providing a daily as well as a weekly summary of what was happening on the ground. At a single glance this page-long summary documented what was happening in each district under specific heads: Murder; Railways (sabotage, bomb explosions, obstruction/pelting); Bombs (explosions, recoveries)... Arson (road-bridges, party offices/ residences of candidates) and so on.

These Situation Reports (SITREPS in Bureau parlance) were often interspersed with editorial comments: the violence is taking on a communal and ethnic colour, things have deteriorated to an extent that "walking out is an act of bravery", what has been a relatively peaceful movement is in the process of being pushed into becoming a secessionist movement, the "coercive poll" will mark "the beginning of insurgency". But for the moment I do not want to labour these comments rather the point that the actual facts were being relayed faithfully and were enough to have alerted anyone that a war of all against all had broken out, that the state machinery had completely collapsed. Beginning from January 7, 1983, the day elections were announced, till the end of the elections on February 21 the Intelligence Bureau headquarters in Delhi received data about, to use police terminology, 19,172 "violent incidents", ranging from murder to explosions to assaults.

The reports of the individual police stations, of district police headquarters, of the Special Branch itself were specific, detailed and accurate. The Special Branch also submitted an Election Situation Report three times a day.

Remember that reports and assessments of this kind were given to the Central Government, to Subrahmanian & Co as well as to the Chief Electoral Officer, S.L. Khosla. Whatever editorialised passage he may quote from this assessment report or that to cover his position today, none can plead that he was not kept informed about the facts of

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what was happening. "Even the biggest blockhead," a senior police officer twice repeated to me, "could see what was happening."

The Stage Set

But more than any of this, the decision to ram through the "elections without revision" contributed to what transpired between February 14 and February 18 in four other ways.

First, it alienated, indeed enraged the people throughout the Brahmaputra valley. They felt humiliated, they now despaired of ever obtaining justice. The consequence was immediate. A state like Assam is difficult to police even in the best of circumstances. Darrang district, for instance, stretches across a distance longer by far than the distance from Delhi to Chandigarh. And in normal times the district has just 1,000 to 1,200 policemen to maintain the peace. Thus, whether law and order will in fact prevail depends primarily on the temper of the people themselves. And by December the people throughout the Brahmaputra valley felt cheated, they felt they had been deliberately done in.

Second, and worse still, the decision rent asunder the state apparatus itself. The average policeman seethed with anger, he resolved to be an instrument no longer for suppressing his own people at the behest of what he now looked upon as the alien occupiers from Delhi.

Officers who were suspected to harbour the slightest reservation about the decision had, as I noted, been put on the shelf. There were many, of course, who saw in the decision of the rulers an opportunity to prove themselves, who looked upon the Assam movement as a personal affront, who to this day talk of the Assamese as "these people". They now sat in every office of consequence. But the men of the police force hated them.

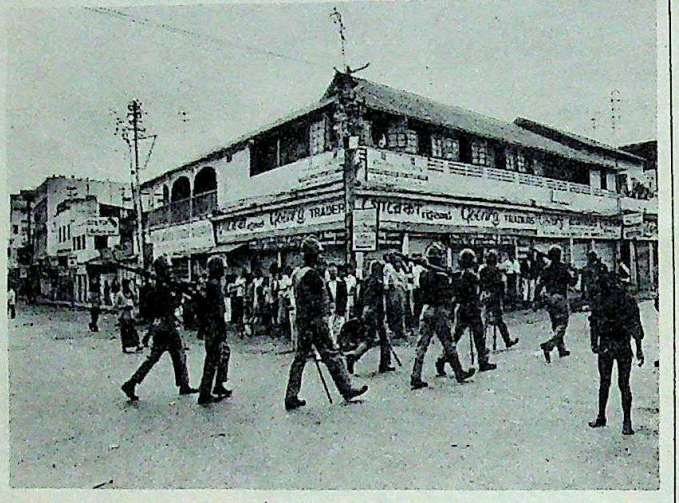
Third, the priorities of these officers too had by now been perverted. They saw that the rulers wanted only one thing: to be able to hold the elections, nay, to go through the ritual of the elections, nay, to be able to proclaim one way or another that the ritual of the elections had been gone through. And so they in turn were dinning into their men that "election duty, election duty is all that matters". And "election duty" meant not ensuring a free and fair poll but merely making sure that the 8,000-odd officers, probationers and others who had been air-lifted for polling duty did not suffer any inconvenience, much less any bruises. "It has been such a goddamned struggle getting them here," they were told, "and they are frightened as hell; the moment just one of them gets hurt, all of them will run away. So, election duty is all that matters."

An alienated, over-stretched force, a leadership looking the wrong way.

So complete was the breakdown that by early February the top leadership of the police, instead of directing operations from headquarters, was frantically running from the scene of one violent clash to another. The flight schedules of helicopters show that, for instance, K.P.S. Gill, IGP (Law and Order) literally visited seven to eight district headquarters every day, not for preventing the carnage but, as was explained to me, for just holding the forces from collapsing completely.

Outside forces were, of course, inducted in large number, but the 65 battalions that are said to have been deployed were not of as much use as their numbers would suggest. Because of the fact that when units from outside are in an area to assist the local police they are supposed to function under the officer commanding the local unit, the senior officers of the CRPF—who by this rule would have had to serve under their juniors—had not accompanied the units. The units were therefore leaderless. They were also unfamiliar with the terrain, the people, the language. They had to depend on the local Assam policemen for guidance. And these latter were not merely resentful but hostile—for only were their own people being suppressed here, they felt, was the force of occupation. The hostility often burst into the open and at least at one place there was a pitched battle between the Assam Police and the CRPF in which, on the Government's own admission, six jawans were killed.

Sensing hostility as well as indispensability the CRPF units had become a law unto themselves: trigger-happy at one moment, sullen and fearful at others. The men insisted, for instance, that they would not move out on patrols or do anything at all except in section strength, that is, in groups of seven or so. And, in any case like everyone else the CRPF too was nailed to "election duty".



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The fourth factor that set the stage was the silliest of all. No situation warranted the introduction of the army as this one did. Every intelligence report had urged that the army be kept in readiness. But here the chief election commissioner had put his foot down: the army should not be called out, he had laid down, for election duty or to maintain law and order; if altogether unavoidable the army may be requested to help protect the vital installations only. The good man had thought that this would be the litmus test: once the state administration called out the army to save lives, to maintain law and order he would know that the conditions had deteriorated to such an extent that a free and fair poll could not be held. But, as you will see from a single instance, Subrahmanian & Co would much rather sacrifice lives than fail any of the litmus tests.

On February 2, a young IAS officer Harshmohan Cairae, the additional deputy commissioner at Tezpur, sensing that the situation in his district had reached flashpoint, in fact requisitioned the army and he informed everyone over the wireless. The head of the Special Branch also flashed signals

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their headquarters in Gauhati that, contrary to the appearances that had to be kept up, the man had actually requisitioned the army. No sooner did the information reach Subrahmanian, Khosla and Co. than they hit the ceiling. Tremendous pressure was put on Cairae to withdraw his order requisitioning the army. He did not budge; the next day his superiors did what he had refused to do, they cancelled the requisition order.

But the incident had become too widely known, there were wireless messages and all. And so a plausible cover-up had to be devised. Thus it transpired that at the Security Coordination Meeting, Subrahmanian, apropos of nothing, began thanking the army for its help in repairing the bridges in the state. As he was going on about this, the secretary of the Public Works Department remarked (this was to be one of the few interruptions of Subramanian's monologues in the one and a half month history of these meetings), "Pardon my interruption, sir, but as you know every bridge in the state has been repaired by and is being repaired by the Public Works Department." Subrahmanian merely looked down at the table and resumed his monologue, "We are all grateful to the army for repairing the bridges..."

And it was Subrahmanian's version that was put out to the world. On February 4, the Government of Assam put out "A Clarification":

"DISPUR, FEBRUARY 4:— To help in speedy restoration of disrupted communications on National High Way between Sipajhar and Mangaldoi and to quickly recommission the burnt and damaged bridges, assistance of the Army was sought. The burnt bridges were repaired and normal communication restored on 3.2.83 afternoon. Except for providing the above technical assistance Army was not called in to assist the civil authorities for maintenance of law and order. The action taken by the State Govt. has not violated any directive of the Election Commission of India in the utilisation of the armed forces."

"Elections must be held come what may," as Subrahmanian used to say and, given the admonition of the Election Commission, elections could not be held if the army was called out. As keeping appearances was more important than keeping lives, the army was kept out The one officer, Cairae who did what the situation warranted was swiftly disowned. (He is now on indefinite leave at Moradabad).

THE STAGE was now set: the people split into warring camps; the average policeman gone hostile; officers beleaguered; an outside force hated, unaccountable, fearful; everyone nailed down to protecting and taking care of the two sets without whom the ritual could not be gone through: the candidates (with their families) and the polling officers.

When one reads the wireless messages from the field—the urgent calls for help, for reinforcements, the penultimate warnings —or those sent out from the headquarters— the warnings summarising the information coming from the field, the urgent reminders that such and thus be done—one is transported into Kafka's world. Messages of life and death streak over the wireless but no one pays any heed, everyone is busy with "election duty".

I shall trace one sequence to take you to the lethal end.

First, read five wireless messages despatched by the inspector general of police (Special Branch) to all district police headquarters on January 5, 25 and 29, and February 12 and 14. Notice the mounting anxiety, notice the urgent directions that drills that have been prescribed earlier be put into effect immediately. And remember that these messages were not originating in a vacuum: these messages present in a sense the summary of countless warnings and pleas for help that were being received from the field:

* * *

CIPHER
TO: ALL DISPOLS EXCEPT SLC AND HFG GHTY (BY HAND)
FROM: IGP SB ASSAM GHTY
NO. SB IV/314/83/1 DT 5/1/83

REPORTS RECEIVED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES INDICATE THAT ANTI SOCIAL ELEMENTS AND COMMUNAL TROUBLE MONGERS ARE TRYING TO FOMENT COMMUNAL DISTURBANCES IN VULNERABLE POCKETS PARTICULARLY IN THE BRAHMAPUTRA VALLEY DISTTS IN ORDER TO SCUTTLE HOLDING OF ELECTION (.) PSE REVIEW COMMUNAL SITUATION IN YOUR RESPECTIVE DISTRICT AND TAKE ALL PRECAUTIONARY PREVENTIVE MEASURES AGAINST OUTBREAK OF ANY COMMUNAL VIOLENCE (.) UNDERSTAND YOU HAVE ALREADY MADE CONTINGENCY PLAN WHICH MAY BE MADE UP TO DATE TO MEET THE SITUATION (.) PSE REPORT COMPLIANCE (.)

* * *

CIPHER
TO: ALL DISPOLS DSB ASSAM/GHTY (BY HAND) (.)
FROM: IGP SB GHTY (.)
NO: SB IV/314/83/12 DT 25/1/83
SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES BY ANTI-ELECTION/EXTREMIST ELEMENTS BY WAY OF SABOTAGE/ KIDNAPPING/MURDER ETC ASSUMED ALARMING PROPORTIONS SINCE LAST FEW DAYS (.) BUT ALL THESE TERRORIST ACTIVITIES OF AGITATIONISTS SO FAR FAILED TO DETER INTENDING CANDIDATES FROM PARTICIPATING IN ENSUING ELECTIONS(.) FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF FILING OF NOMINATION PAPERS AND GOVERNMENTAL EFFORTS TO HOLD ELECTIONS PEACEFULLY AS PER SCHEDULE ANTI ELECTION/EXTREMIST ELEMENTS HAVE BECOME MORE DESPERATE(.) IN THEIR DESPERATE BID TO SCUTTLE ELECTIONS THESE ELEMENTS JOINTLY WITH THE RSS/BJP MAY PLUNGE THE STATE INTO A COMMUNAL TURMOIL BY RESORTING TO LARGE SCALE VIOLENCE ARSON/LOOTING/MURDER ETC. SUCH VIOLENCE MAY BE ASSAMESE BENGALI

THE STAGE was now set: the people split into warring camps; the average policeman gone hostile; officers beleaguered; an outside force hated, unaccountable, fearful; everyone nailed down to protecting and taking care of the two sets without whom the ritual could not be gone through: the candidates (with their families) and the polling officers.

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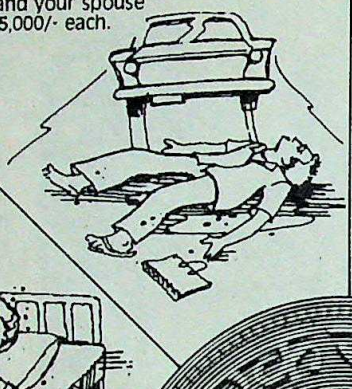
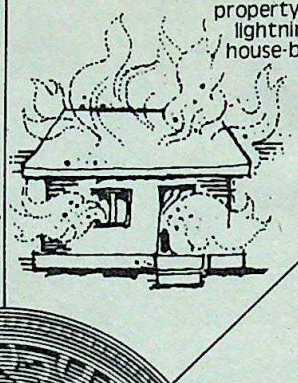


*** FIRE AND THEFT —** protects against loss or damage of your family property resulting from fire, lightning, burglary, riots, house-breaking, larceny or theft.



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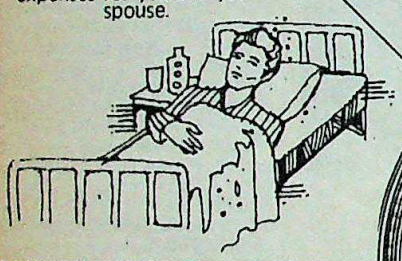
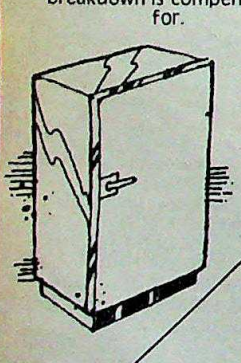


*** PERSONAL LIABILITIES —** protection for legal liability worth Rs. 25,000/-

*** ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES BREAKDOWN —** loss or damage due to breakdown is compensated for.



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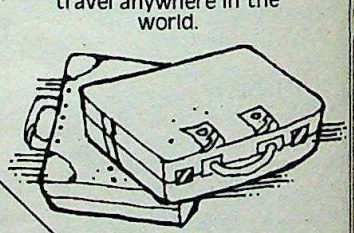

*** TELEVISION SET DAMAGE —** due to fire, lightning, short circuiting, arcing, self - heating etc., as well as third party liability, is covered.

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OR HINDU MUSLIM DEPENDING ON LOCAL SITUATION OF PLACES CONCERNED(.) IN FACT SOME SUCH INCIDENTS HAVE ALREADY TAKEN PLACE HERE AND THERE(.) PROPOSED ANTI ELECTION MEETINGS/RALLIES TO BE HELD AT DIFFERENT PLACES BY BJP AND OTHER ANTI ELECTION POLITICAL PARTIES ARE LIKELY TO GENERATE HEAT AND TENSION LEADING TO COMMUNAL CLASHES(.) PSE ENSURE CLOSE WATCH AND EFFECTIVE ACTION TO PUT DOWN ALL SUCH TROUBLES AT THE VERY POINT OF ORIGIN WITH STRONG HAND(.) PSE ALSO REFER TO OUR EARLIER CIRCULARS
NO. SB IV/314/82/108 DT 10/12/82
NO. SB IV/314/6 DT 7/1/83
NO. SB IV/23/83/4 DT 19/1/83(.)
TAKE STRONG PREVENTIVE MEASURES AND FURNISH LIST OF RSS/BJP EXTREMIST ELEMENTS WHOSE DOSSIERS HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO DISTRICT MAGISTRATES FOR ACTION UNDER NSA URGENTLY(.)

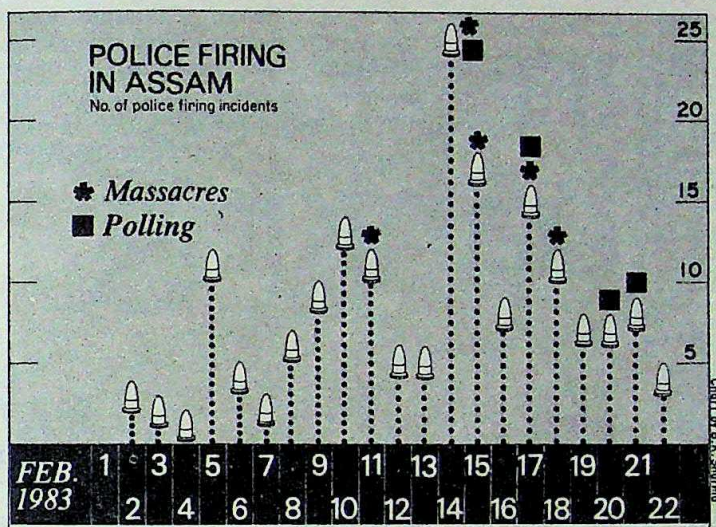
* * *

WT MESSAGE CIPHER
TO: ALL DISPOLS DSB/GHTY
FROM: IGP SB ASSAM GHTY(.)
NO. SB IV/314/83/13 DT 29.1.83(.)

IT HAS BEEN NOTICED THAT A COMMUNAL SITUATION IS BUILDING UP FOLLOWING VARIOUS INCIDENTS OF ARSON/ASSAULT/MURDERS OF COMMUNAL NATURE IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE STATE(.) DURING LAST FEW DAYS BESIDES TWO REPORTS OF MURDERS FROM DARRANG AND NOWGONG DISTRICTS A NUMBER OF ARSON/ASSAULTS DIRECTED AGAINST THE MEMBERS OF RELIGIOUS/LINGUISTIC MINORITIES ARE POURING IN(.) THE TREND OF EVENTS SUGGESTS POSSIBILITY OF LARGE SCALE COMMUNAL FLARE UP IF NOT NIPPED IN THE BUD(.) EFFECTIVE STEPS TO PUT DOWN ANY SUCH DEVELOPMENT AT THE VERY POINT OF ORIGIN(.) PSE ALSO ENSURE ADEQUATE SECURITY TO ALL VULNERABLE/MINORITY POCKETS AND SENSITIVE AREAS(.) IN THIS CONNECTION PSE REFER TO OUR INSTRUCTIONS CONVEYED IN CIPHER MESSAGE NO. SB IV/314/83/12 DT 25/1/83 AND CONFIRM ACTION URGENTLY.

* * *

TO: DISPOLS DBR/JHT/NWG/ DPU/TZP/NL/ DBB/GHTY (BY HAND)(.)
FROM: IGP SB GHTY(.)
NO. SB IV/314/83/23 DT. 12.2.83(.)
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS INDICATE COMMUNAL SITUATION IN THE BRAHMAPUTRA VALLEY DISTRICTS AND KARBI ANGLONG IS DEVELOPING VERY FAST(.) DIBRUGARH DISTRICT AFFECTED AREAS APPEAR TO BE CHAUBA, NAMRUP, JOYPUR, DIGBOI AND OTHER LIKELY AREAS TOOK, DOOMDOOMA, MORAN ETC(.) IN DARRANG DISTRICT GOHPUR, DHEKIAJULI, RANGPARA, UDALGURI, PANERI, MAJBHAT, KALAIGAON, MANGALDOI, SIPAJHAR ETC AREAS HAVE WITNESSED COMMUNAL INCIDENTS(.) IN LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT NL/BIHPURIA AREAS HAVE BECOME VULNERABLE(.) IN KAMRUP DISTRICT BOKO PS, CHAYAGAON PS AREAS IN SOUTH BANK HAVE ALREADY SEEN COMMUNAL VIOLENCE(.) SIMILAR DEVELOPMENTS NOTICED IN HAWLY, SARUPETA, BHABANIPUR, CHENGA, BARMA, PATHSALA, SORBHOG ETC AREAS(.) IN NOWGONG AND SIBSAGAR DISTRICTS TENSION IS RUNNING HIGH AND SITUATION MAY LEAD TO OPEN CONFRONTATION AND ATTACK BETWEEN GROUPS BELONGING TO DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES(.) IN KARBI ANGLONG HOWRAHGHAT, BOWKAJAN AREAS HAVE BECOME VULNERABLE(.) RECENT INCIDENTS INDICATE MOB ATTACKS ARSON BEING CARRIED OUT IN PREPLANNED MANNER(.) IMPERATIVE TAKE STRONG PRECAUTIONARY PREVENTIVE MEASURES INCLUDING LARGE SCALE ARRESTS OF ANTI SOCIAL AND COMMUNAL ELEMENTS IN VULNERABLE AREAS AND DETENTION OF RING LEADERS BELONGING TO COMMUNAL/AGITATING ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN ARSON/MOB VIOLENCE ETC(.) IN THIS CONNECTION PSE REFER TO OUR CIRCULAR NO. SB IV/314/83/20/ DT. 1.2.83 INDICATING VULNERABLE COMMUNAL POCKETS(.) REQUEST TAKE EFFECTIVE CONTINGENCY MEASURES TO STOP SPREAD OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE(.) REPORT COMPLIANCE



ON THE police's own count, between January 7, the day the decision to hold elections became known, and February 21, the day the polling finished, police opened fire on 202 occasions killing, once again on the count of the police itself, 126 and injuring 162. Like the massacres, most of the firings were bunched around the days of polling.

* * *

WT MESSAGE OE

TO: ALL DISPOLS/GHTY (B.H.)
INFO: IGP LO GHTY (B.H.) DIGPOL WR GHTY (B.H.)/DIGPOL NER TZP/DIGPOL SR SLC/DIGPOL (BORDER) CAMP NWG/ DIGPOL ER JHT(.)
FROM: IGP SB ASSAM GHTY
NO SB IV/314/83/25 DT. 14/2/83

IN CONTEXT OF CURRENT ANTIPOLL AGITATION SEVERAL CLASHES BETWEEN LINGUISTIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS CAUSING LARGE SCALE ARSON/MURDER/LOOTING OF PROPERTIES HAVE TAKEN PLACE DURING THE LAST FEW DAYS IN BOKO CHAYAGAON BARPETA NALBARI AND HAJO PS AREAS (KAMRUP DISTRICT) N LAKHIMPUR DHEKAJI PS AREAS (LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT), GOHPUR PS AREAS (DARRANG DISTRICT) JAGIROAD, LAHARIGHAT MIKHIRBETA PS AREAS (NOWGONG DISTRICT) SITUATION APPEARS TO BE VERY SERIOUS AND ONLY SKETCHY REPORTS ARE RECEIVED HERE AND BY GOVERNMENT(.) PSE ENSURE INITIAL REPORT BY WT COVERING (1) NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE CLASHES COMMUNITY WISE (2) EXTENT OF LOSS OF PROPERTIES SUFFERED BY EACH COMMUNITY (3) LOSS OF HUMAN LIFE IF ANY WITH ALL DETAILS (4) NATURE OF WEAPONS USED (5) EXTENT OF POLICE ACTION INVOLVED IN DEALING WITH THE SITUATION (6) REASON FOR CLASHES (7) PROBABLE REPURCUSSION IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD (8) ANY OTHER POINT OF IMPORTANCE(.) AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF MINORITY POCKETS AND COMMUNALLY SENSITIVE AREAS OF YOUR RESPECTIVE DISTRICT WAS SENT TO YOU VIDE OUR NO SB IV/314/83/20 DT. 1.2.83 TO ENABLE YOU TO TAKE ADEQUATE MEASURES FOR DEALING WITH SUCH CLASHES. IN VIEW OF SERIOUSNESS OF DEVELOPING SITUATION PSE ENSURE EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO PREVENT SPREAD OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE TO OTHER AREAS AS INSTRUCTED BY OUR CIPHER MESSAGES NO. SB IV/314/83/23 DT. 12.2.83 NO. SB IV/1314/83/22 DT. 8.2.83 AND NO. SB IV/314/83/14 DT. 3.2.83

* * *

The warnings came true. On the police's own count, between January 7, the day the decision to hold elections became known, and February 21, the day the polling finished, police opened fire on 202 occasions killing, once again on the count of the police itself, 126 and injuring 162. Like the massacres, most of the firings were bunched around the days of polling.

Each of these warnings, each of these directives reached Nowgong too. In this

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district is a place called Marigaon. It has a substantial police station. The 5th Battalion of the Assam Police as well as a unit of the CRPF were stationed here.

Jagiroad, a smaller place in the area, has the police station in whose jurisdiction Nellie lies.

The Nellie Massacre

In the forenoon of 18, February, 1,383 men, women and children (yes, thirteen hundred and eighty-three) were butchered in and around Nellie. (That isn't my estimate. It is the estimate contained in the report on the Nellie massacre submitted on March 5, 1983, by Samar Das, inspector general of police, Special Branch, Government of Assam, to the chief minister and others).

Notice, first, that the killings took place not in one isolated village but in 10—Nellie, Basundhari, Matiparbat, Bhogdobabil, Bhogdobhabi, Alisinga, Silbheta, Borjala, Muladhari and Borbori.

Notice, second, that these villages are not in the back of beyond. Nellie in fact is right on the national highwav. All the villages lie across a completely flat plain. The police patrol post of Amsoi is just a kilometre from Borbori, the village where the most brutal massacre occured. The Jagiroad police station under whose jurisdiction these villages fall is nearby and the 5th Battalion of the Assam Police at Marigaon was only 10 km away.

Notice, third, that each time an exercise was done about the situation that would develop once elections were announced—specifically in July 1982 and again in October 1982 and yet again in December 1982—the entire area in which these villages lie had been identified by the district police as well as the special Branch in Gauhati as being a likely trouble spot. Indeed, of the 10 villages in which people were eventually butchered as many as six had been listed by name as being among the "minority pockets" that were liable to be attacked. Of these six, two—Nellie and Alisinga—had not just been designated as "minority pockets" in a general way, they had been specifically pinpointed as being among the seven "sensitive areas" in Nowgong district where violence was not just possible but probable. The lists of these "minority pockets" and "sensitive areas" had been sent to each district and divisional headquarters as had the lists of "anti-socials" who had to be apprehended once the tension mounted.

Notice, fourth, that on February 18 it wasn't as if five or six fellows had crept up stealthily in the cover of darkness and killed the 1,383 in one sudden, swift move. Quite the contrary:

► The mob that descended on Nellie and the surrounding villages was (and in all this I am going solely by the estimates of the police itself as contained in the report referred to earlier) 12,000 strong;

► The persons who joined it came not from one village but from a score of villages. Some of the villages are 18 to 20 km from the impact area;

► This enormous, ever-swelling mob set out around 5 a.m. It marched in broad daylight. It marched to the beating of drums;

► The killings commenced around 8 a.m. and went on for at least four hours.

All this is bad enough and bears testimony to the condition to which the law and order machinery of the state had been reduced. But while bad enough, it isn't all. The terrible fact is that the police had not just general but specific warnings well before February 18 about what was liable to happen.

Recall the warnings Nowgong was receiving from headquarters.

Notice next that the wireless messages originating in Nowgong itself bear testimony to the warning signals. I shall go no farther back than the wireless message sent from the district police headquarters on February 10—that is, a full eight days before the massacre—as it links up with the messages from Gauhati that I have reproduced earlier.

* * *

WT MESSAGE O.E.

TO: ALL O/C DSB (.)
INFO: DY S.P. HQ/DY. SRP LMG/DFO (.)
FROM: DISPOL NWG (.)
NO. 1930-58/DSB DT. 10.2.83.
SIGNAL FROM IGP SB GHTY NO. SBII (A)/62-A-83/VOL/II/191 DATED 9.2.83. IN VIEW OF INCREASING INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND ATTACK ON MINORITIES IMPERATIVE ALL VULNERABLE MINORITY POCKETS BE INSULATED FROM OUTSIDERS/VIOLENCE MOBS/EXTREMISTS (.) STEPS BE TAKEN TO COVER MINORITY POCKETS WITH ADEQUATE POLICE PICKETS/MOBILE PATROLLING TO ENSURE PROTECTION (.) PSE TAKE ACTION ACCORDINGLY (.)

* * *

Three days later—that is, five days before the massacre—the DIG at Nowgong directed the force to intensify patrolling in view of the extreme tensions that had developed:

* * *

WT MESSAGE O.E.
TO: ALL OCS/I/CS OP/CIS (.)
FROM: DIG (B) C/NWG
NO: 80/83 (CONTROL) DT. 13.2.83.

0PSE INTENSIFY PATROLLING IN MINORITY POCKETS TO PREVENT ANY COMMUNAL TROUBLES (.) MAXIMUM AND EFFECTIVE USE SHOULD BE DONE OF FORCE PROVIDED TO YOU (.) INCIDENTS OF COMMUNAL NATURE SHOULD BE DEALT WITH VERY FIRMLY (.)

* * *

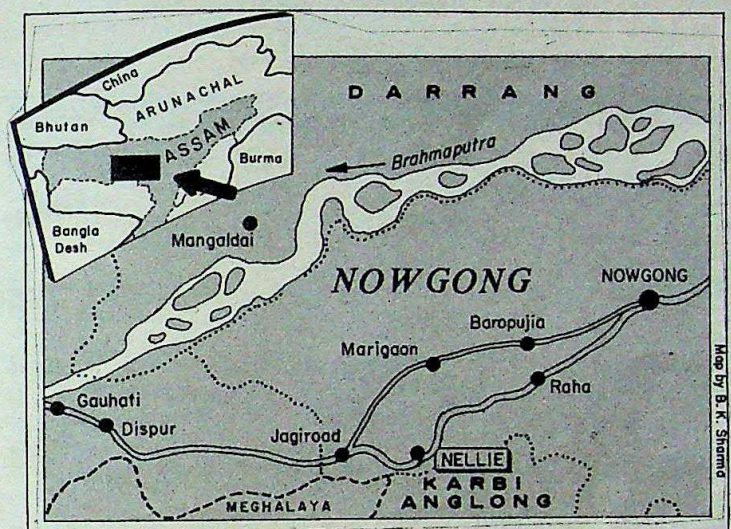
A second message—again five days before the massacre—from the SP was even more specific and urgent:

* * *

WT MESSAGE O.E.
TO: ALL OCS/ICS DY SP/COS
INFO: CO. OF OUTSIDE POLICE BATTALION
FROM: SP NWG DIG (B) C/NWG
NO: N/1/14/2/83 DT. 13.2.83

•

INCIDENTS OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE HAVE BEEN REPORTED FROM SOME PARTS OF THE DISTRICT. IMMEDIATE POLICE ACTION ON THE SPOT OF VIOLENCE IS REQUIRED. ALL PRECAUTIONS TO BE TAKEN TO PREVENT ANY FURTHER FLARE UP PARTICULARLY IN THOSE AREAS WHERE POLLING IS TAKING



THESE villages are not in the back of beyond. Nellie in fact is right on the national highway. All the villages lie across a completely flat plain. The police patrol post of Amsoi is just a kilometre from Borbori, the village where the most brutal massacre occurred.

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PLACE ON 14/2/83 (.) IMMEDIATELY SEAR CHES/RAIDS SHOULD BE ORGANISED TO CATCH THE CULPRITS (.) INTENSIVE MOBILE PATROLLING IN THE EFFECTIVE SPOTS AND PLACES WHERE COMMUNAL TROUBLE IS APPREHENDED SOON AFTER POLLING IS OVER SENIOR OFFICERS SHOULD THEMSELVES ORGANIZE AND IMPLEMENT THESE ARRANGEMENTS TONIGHT RPT TONIGHT ITSELF (.) ALL COMMUNAL VIOLENCE SHOULD BE DEALT WITH VERY FIRMLY (.)

* * *

On February 14—four days before the massacre—the deputy commissioner at Nowgong sent a message specifically to the sub-deputy collector stationed at Jagiroad (the very place in the jurisdiction of whose police station Nellie etc lay):

* * *

WT MESSAGE O.E.

TO: SUB DEPUTY COLLECTOR J/ROAD (.)
FROM: DEP COM NWG (.)
DATED FOURTEENTH FEBRUARY (.)

YOU SHOULD KEEP WATCH OVER THE COMMUNAL SITUATION IN YOUR AREA SPLY AFTER THE POLL TODAY (.) IN CASE OF ANY COMMUNAL FLARES UP IMMEDT. AND STRONG ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN (.) YOU SHOULD KEEP IN TOUCH WITH COMMANDT. CRPF SRI MOHAR SINGH (.) NOWGONG CONTROL SHOULD BE KEPT INFORMED T/PHONE NO 405(.)

* * *

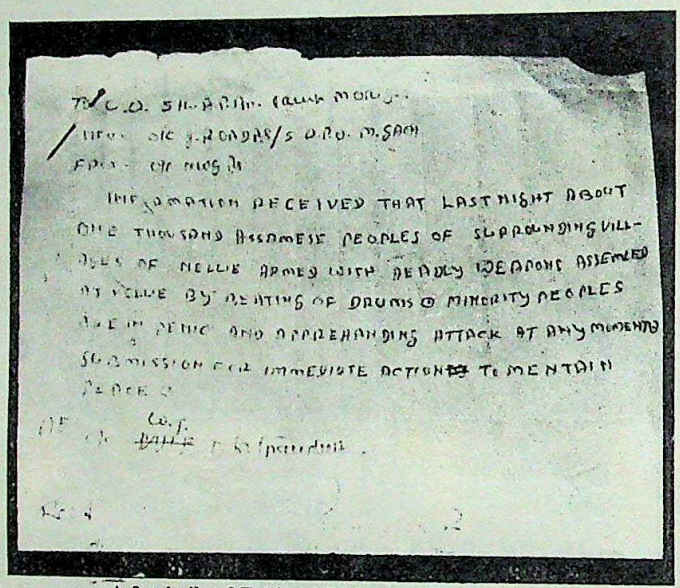
But the leadership of the force from the inspectors general in Gauhati to the commandant in Marigaon to the officers in charge in Marigaon and Jagiroad had been told again and again that their first task (and in the circumstances it meant their only task) was to protect the personnel who were said to be doing election duty. Moreover, by this time they were completely lost putting out the fires that were already raging—the killings at Sipajhar, Chamariya, Sipajhar again, Gohpur, Kharaibari, Goreshwar etc. had followed one upon another. Worst of all, the decision to ram through the elections had rent completely asunder the men through whose hands, after all, these officers had to act. Thus, nothing but nothing followed upon any one of the warnings.

On the afternoon of February 15—three days before the massacre—Zahir-ud Din Ahmed, the officer-in-charge of Nowgong Police Station, sent the most specific of warnings to the Commandant of the 5th Battalion of Assam Police (stationed at Marigaon which is no more than 10 km from the Nellie area), the sub-divisional police officer at Marigaon as well as to the officer in charge of the police station at Jagiroad itself

TO: CO. 5TH AP
INFO: O/C J/ROAD PS/SDPO (M)
FROM: O/C NWG PS(.) DT. 15.2 83

INFORMATION RECEIVED THAT L/NIGHT ABOUT ONE THOUSAND ASSAMESE OF SURROUNDING VILLAGES OF NELLIE WITH DEADLY WEAPONS ASSEMBLED AT NELLIE BY BEATING OF DRUMS (.) MINORITY PEOPLES ARE IN PANIC AND APPREHENDING ATTACK AT ANY MOMENT (.) SUBMISSION FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO MAINTAIN PEACE (.)

Although I had learnt of the condition to which the law and order machinery had been reduced well before I came across



A facsimile of Zahir-ud Din's warning message

Zahir-ud Din's message and although I have read Zahir-ud Din's message a dozen times since I first came across it, it still sends a chill down my spine. As does the fact that nothing followed upon it.

On February 16—now two days before the massacres in and around Nellie—the Jagiroad police station received specific pleas for help.

On February 18 itself, as I noted earlier, the killings began around 8 a.m. Even if we go by his own account, the officer in charge of the Jagiroad police station received information about the killings at 10.35 a.m. (cf: entry number 467 dated 18.2.83 in the General Diary of the Jagiroad police station) and yet the police party accompanied by personnel from the CRPF did not reach the area till 3 p.m.

Nellie, as I noted, is on the national highway and the other villages are connected by *kutcha* but motorable roads that branch off from the highway.

And Nellie was just one of the massacres.

Postscript

I better add a word of caution for anyone who may now be tempted to destroy the crucial wireless message sent by Zahir-ud Din or to alter the entries in the general diaries at Nowgong and Jagiroad: it is a bit late to attempt such foolishness. Remember

► the message was sent not to one but to three centres;

► Zahir-ud Din still has in his possession his copy of the message; it bears the receipt signature of the officer in charge of wireless transmission. Nowgong, and his notice that the message was transmitted to Marigaon at 15.30 hours and to Jagiroad at 15.50 hours;

► the message is duly reproduced in and forms a vital link in the report of the IGP, Special Branch, which has been with the Government since March 1, that is, for a full two months now, the report has been extensively discussed in meetings chaired by the chief minister himself at which several officers have been present.

► at least two copies of the report are available here in the Home Ministry in Delhi—in the offices of N.R. Laskar, minister of state for home, and P.R. Nayyar, special secretary, home, from which it has not been particularly difficult to obtain them thus far;

► because of this evidence the Os/C Jagiroad and Amsoi Patrol post have been suspended and the commandant, 5th Battalion, has been asked for an explanation.

And so you'll have to do a lot of fudging if you decide to scrub out the message now.

Even if our MP's cannot secure the original wireless messages, and the original assessment reports of the Intelligence Bureau and the Special Branch, can they not at least get the Government to lay on the table of the House the report of the inspector general of police, Special Branch, on the Nellie massacre?

And I hope they won't let the Government get away with the excuse that it cannot lay the report in Parliament as it pertains to law and order and law and order is a state subject. The events the report deals with took place when Assam was under President's Rule and, as is evident, nothing could contributed as much to the breakdown of governance in the state, to setting the stage for the war of all against all as the directives and preferences of the same Central Government that the Parliament is expected to oversee.

Has Parliament lost the capacity to wrest even this single document?

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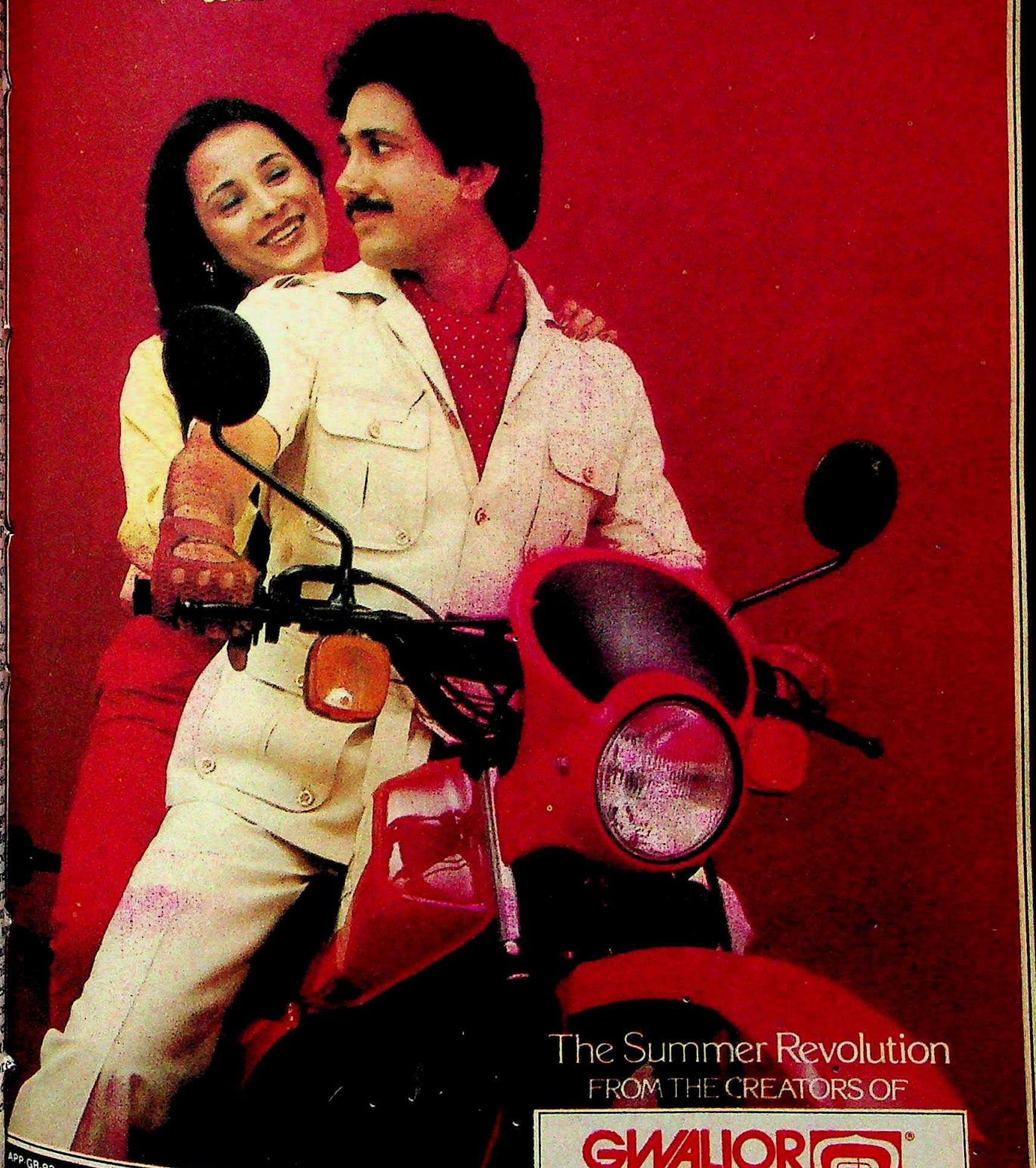

The Summer Revolution

FROM THE CREATORS OF

GWALIOR SUITING

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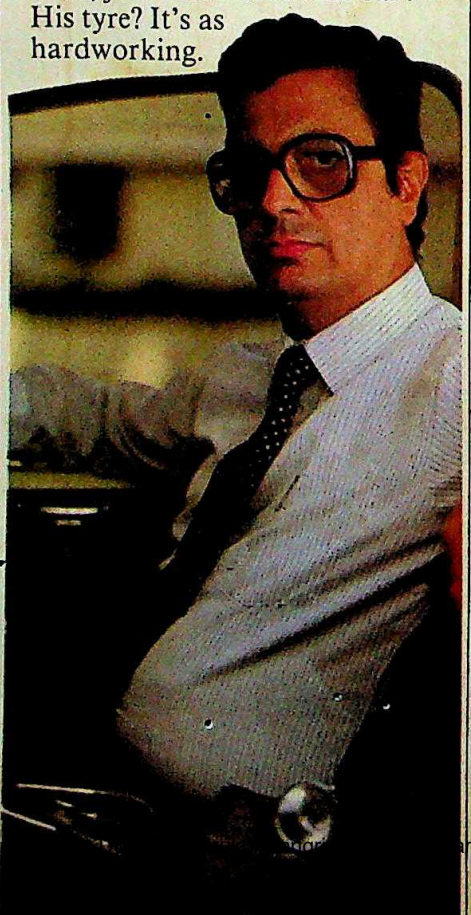
Retired Brigadier Rao. Busy Dr Bakshi. Trendy Mr Tandon. They all go different ways...

Retired Brigadier Rao

His 1960 model is still in fine fettle. Runs him to the Golf Club in the morning, to friends for a hand of bridge in the evening. In between, there's the occasional visit to the doctor and dropping Mrs Rao at her welfare meeting every Wednesday. His tyre? Like his car, it must be a faithful companion.

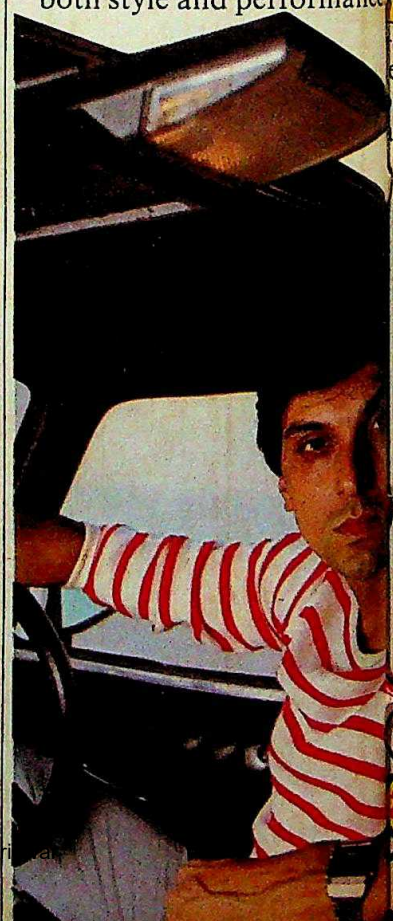
Busy Dr Bakshi

Always on the move. 7 am yoga classes; 8.15 am children to school; 8.30 am chamber; 10.30 am classes at the Medical College; 1 pm home for lunch; 2 pm visits to patients; 3.30 pm children from school; 5 pm chamber; 8 pm Club... and, of course, emergency calls anytime—day or night. And if you think Dr Bakshi works hard, just think about his car! His tyre? It's as hardworking.



Trendy Mr Tandon

8-track stereo, bucket seats, real leather upholstery, wrap-around rear view mirror... this car has it all. And whether it's driving Mr Tandon to his factory 40 from the city or dropping hi wife off at the charity premi of the latest Shyam Benegal film, it spells just one thing. class. His tyre? The best of both style and performance.



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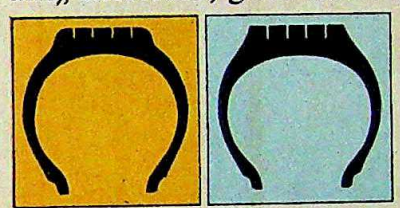

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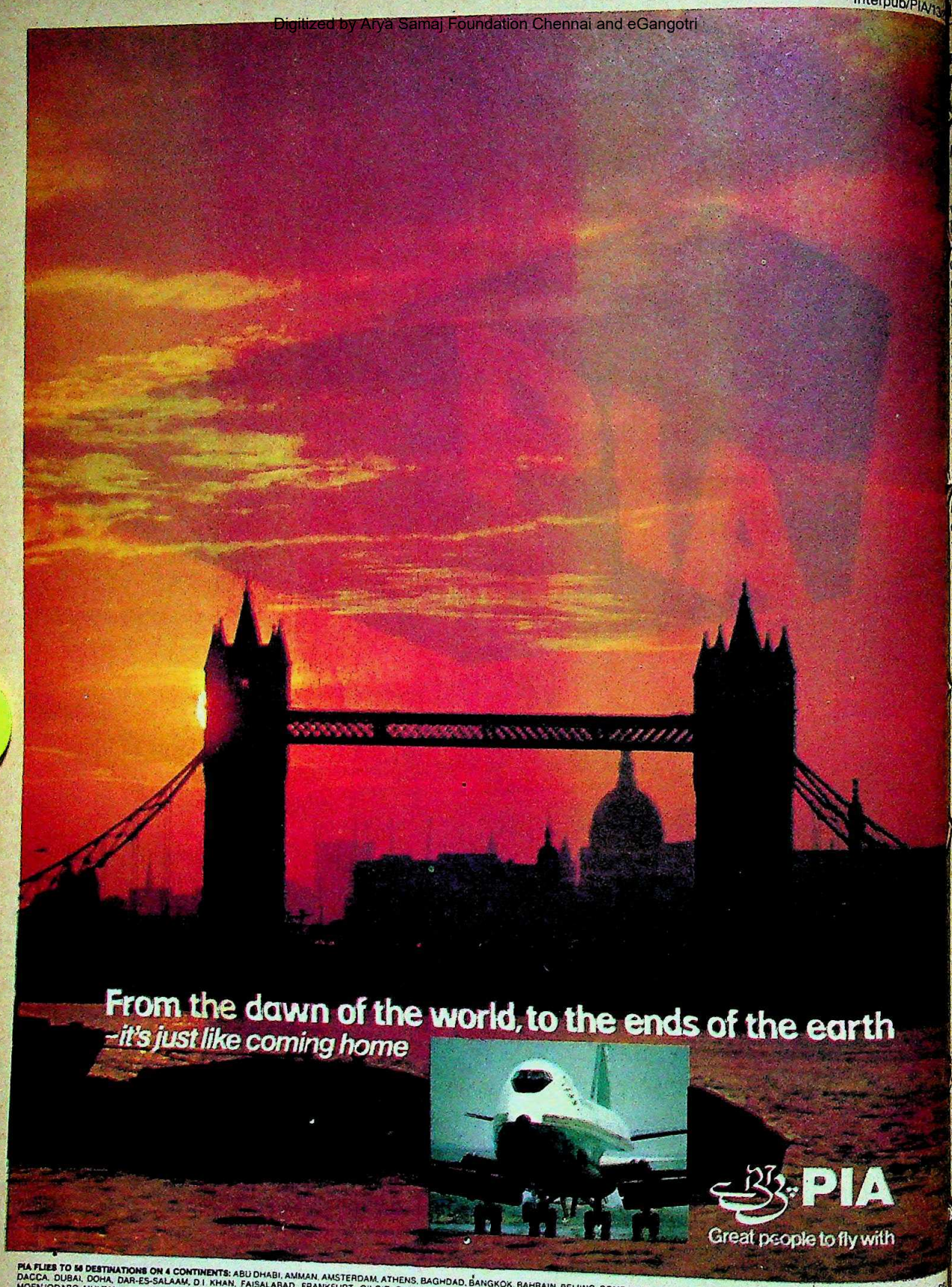

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RAW

The Mystery Mission

THE LATE Bernard Baruch once stated: "Every man has a right to his opinion but no man has a right to be wrong in his facts." Indian newspapers, or at least some of them, would be better served if they paid Baruch some heed, as was evidenced by the events surrounding the departure of Naushervan Framji Suntook as India's spymaster. On April 9, nine days after he relinquished his post as head of the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), a Calcutta daily front-paged a sensational story which, in essence, stated that Suntook had "mysteriously disappeared" on the eve of retirement and had left the country without informing the Government.

The next morning saw a Bombay daily get into the act with even more sensational headlines which clearly implied that Suntook had actually defected. In fact, the article compared Suntook's "disappearance" with that of Soviet double agent Kim Philby. The article also said that the "Government of India suspects that he has defected to an as yet unknown country with some super sensitive documents", and that it was the biggest penetration of the country's counter-intelligence services by another country.

Swift Denial: Meanwhile, official government sources were quick to refute the allegations and insist that Suntook had gone abroad on "urgent official duty". Dismissing the two articles as "products of a fevered imagination", the spokesman stated that Suntook would be back in India shortly. There were red faces in at least two editorial offices when Suntook flew back to New Delhi on April 12 thus dispelling any doubts that there was anything mysterious about his disappearance.

What was mysterious was the fact that the publicisation of Suntook's sensitive mission abroad was undoubtedly a deliberate plant intended to malign his professional reputation. Moreover, the fact that there were only a handful of people in the Prime Minister's Secretariat who were aware of Suntook's mission and his destination could only mean that the leak originated from the very highest levels. Suntook, a stern disciplinarian and a man who plays exclusively by the book, has rubbed plenty of people up the wrong way during his tenure as chief of RAW, but these were people who were not privy to the fact that he had left the country on an official assignment.

INDIA TODAY's investigations and information collected from top-level RAW and airline sources reveal that Suntook's mission took him to New York on the night of March 30, a day before he was scheduled to hand over charge to his successor, G.K. Saxena. He did not, as some reports have alleged, take his wife along on the trip. Neither was his trip a junket, as is being suggested in some circles, as a reward for loyal services rendered.

Important Assignment: His mission, according to sources, was one that was in the national interest and is directly connected with the Akali-instigated violence that was peaking just before Suntook's departure: to meet with the self-styled Khalistan leader Jagjit Singh Chauhan, and convince him to abandon his anti-Indian posturing until the Akali trouble blew over. Suntook also, according to sources, was to extend an invitation to Chauhan to meet with key Indian officials in a neutral country to try and work out a compromise on the Khalistan issue.

The choice of Suntook for the mission was a logical one. RAW officials have had several secret meetings with Chauhan ever since the Khalistan issue first acquired importance and the man who orchestrated the meetings and dealt indirectly with Chauhan was Suntook. In fact, the entire Khalistan issue was under his personal charge and by its very nature was entirely a RAW affair. When the Akali problem turned violent last month, the idea to persuade Chauhan not to fan the flames was mooted by Mrs Gandhi's Principal Secretary, P.C. Alexander, and the logical choice of the man to undertake the mission was Suntook.

Predictably, the Government bungled the entire affair. Instead of waiting until Suntook handed over charge, his orders were to proceed immediately. The result was that when Suntook failed to show up for the official handing-over and his farewell function was abruptly cancelled at the last minute, the rumour mills swung into action, to be followed by the leak that he had gone abroad. If the Government had gone through with the official functions scheduled for March 31, nobody would even have known that Suntook had left the country and the mission would have remained secret. As it turned out, the theories about his disappearance have not just hurt his own reputation but also revealed the serious flaws within what is India's most sensitive intelligence apparatus.

This is also not the first time that a top-level RAW official has disappeared on a mission abroad without notice. In 1978, I.S. Hassanwalia, additional director in RAW, had been sent abroad on a secret mission just before he was due to retire. But the papers never found out or questioned his departure.

Grievances: Already, there are signs that the rumblings in RAW over the last two years have started growing louder. In March, when it was confirmed that Suntook would be handing over to Saxena (INDIA TODAY, March 31), the RAW Employees Union made yet another effort to get their long-standing grievances redressed. A letter addressed to Mrs Gandhi contained a list of 65 deputationists, mainly from the Indian Police Service (IPS) who have been on the RAW pay-rolls for over 10 years—a practice that is against regulations. The letter alleged that the deputationists had formed a "closely-knit power caucus within RAW, causing groupism which ultimately hampered efficiency".

That, unfortunately, is not the only problem that India's new spymaster, "Garry" Saxena, will face. There are at present an incredible 27 cases pending in various courts involving RAW, mainly relating to personnel matters. Unless Saxena undertakes a major shake-up, most of RAW's 6,000 employees will continue to feel that they are, quite literally, getting a raw deal and affairs like the Suntook "defection" will continue to hit the headlines. —DILIP BOBB

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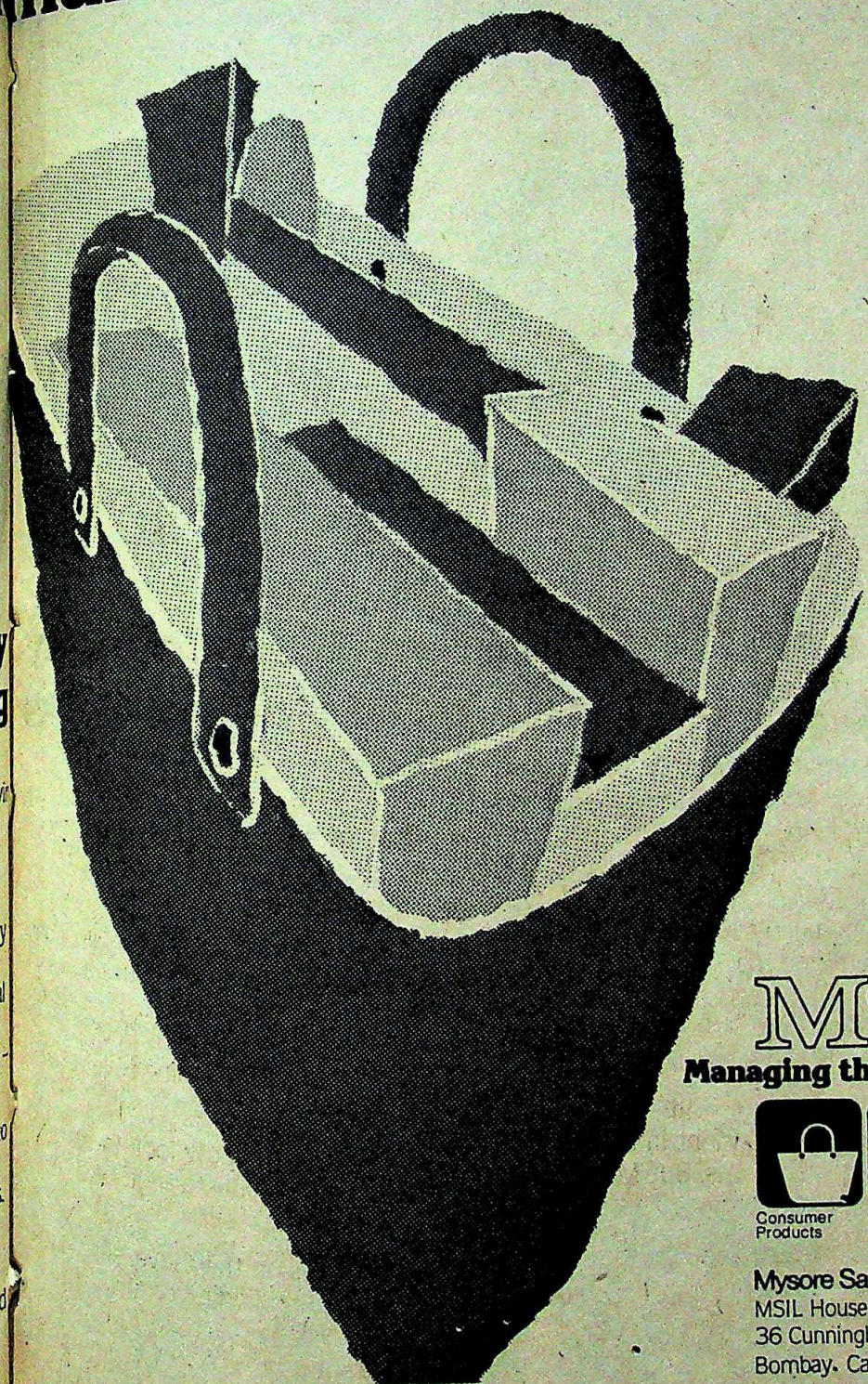

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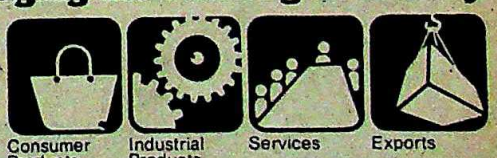

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MID-TERM POLL

The Western Factor

THERE is an aroma in the air that smells suspiciously like a mid-term parliamentary poll in early 1984. Its language is Orwellian. At Varanasi in April, the prime minister appeared to be stung by a question, to which her Morarji Desai-like answer was: "Why should there be a mid-term poll?" But reporters sniffing in and around her party headquarters in Delhi and several state capitals see unmistakable signs of mild election fever. One party official in New Delhi, asked if he thought there would be a mid-term poll in January or February, replied with an enigmatic smile creasing his betel-leaf lacerated lips, "That's a thousand crore rupees question!" A hundred and fifty miles from Delhi, the offices of the Rajasthan Congress(I) state committee almost fret with election nervousness. "When the poll shall be is known to the Only One," grunts a rotund skinhead, gandhi-cap crumpled under a plastic portfolio bulging with papers. "We have been asked to get ready for the plunge even at short notice."

Political watchdogs of the press also find the ruling party and the Government itself girding up for battle. Says *The Hindu*'s G.K. Reddy, who is closer to the regime's antenna than perhaps any other member of the fraternity: "The style of the Government also is getting cramped by the election psychosis as though each and every important decision has to be examined from the point of view of its electoral impact as well."

Significant Steps: Mrs Gandhi has indeed taken several important measures in recent weeks that can be construed as pointing towards a mid-term poll. Her war of reforms on the power and party apparatus of her party, the measures taken to tone up the bureaucracy and to do a bit of house-cleaning, the surprise appointment of the Sarkaria Commission to examine the entire corpus of Centre-state relations, even the chief ministers' conference where she demanded better implementation of the 20-point programme in the states ruled by her men are seen by most observers as the first, firm footsteps towards a mid-term poll.

She just cannot expect to repeat her spectacular landslide victory of 1980 in the next poll whether it be mid-term or not. All that she can expect to get is a stable, impressive plurality of seats—say 280 in a House of more than 544.

Mrs Gandhi will in any case have to face the electorate in 1985 as the term of the present Lok Sabha expires in January of that year. Also scheduled to go to the polls in 1985 are the nine states in which elections were held in June 1980. Five of these states—Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradash—are in the north, only one, Tamil Nadu, is in the south; two are the western states of Maharashtra and Gujarat, while one, Orissa, lies in the east. One of the major political questions Mrs Gandhi will have to decide is whether parliamentary and state assembly elections should be held together or delinked from one another as they had been in 1972. However, the principal question before her now is whether her party stands a better chance of returning to the Lok Sabha with a stable absolute majority if elections were held early next year, or a year or more later, on schedule.

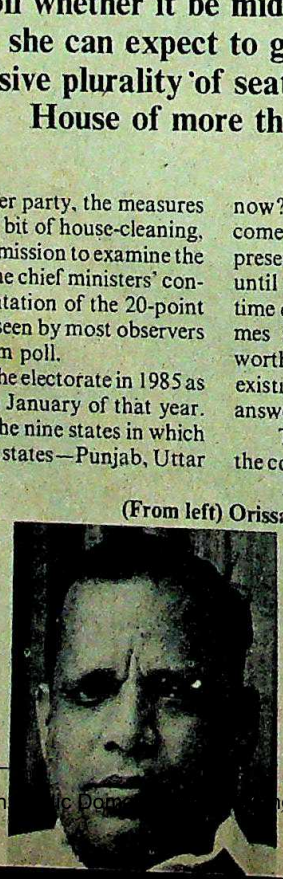
She just cannot expect to repeat her spectacular landslide victory of 1980 in the next poll, whether it be mid-term or not. All that she can expect to get is a stable, impressive plurality of seats—say 280 in a House of more than 544. Even to stack up that many votes she cannot afford to depend entirely on her own charisma which no longer asphalts the road to political power in India. She will need a sound, healthy, united party organisation with hundreds of local leaders who can inspire voters to cast their ballot papers in favour of the Congress(I). The task is far from easy. The image of the party has seldom been poorer. The party machine has never been sicklier. The mood of the voter is by no means reassuring. In fact, it is ominous.

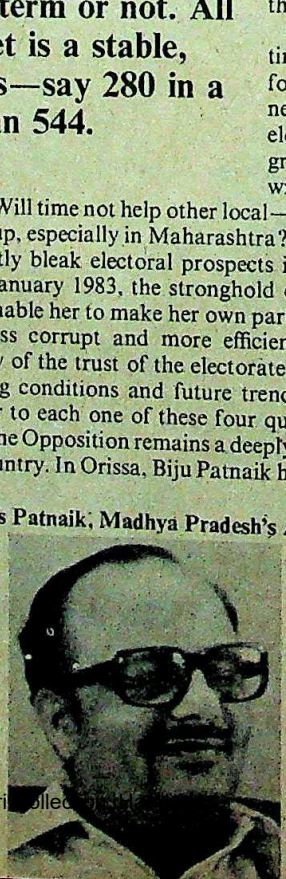
Several factors argue for a mid-term election, some argue against it. By a clever, well-timed tactical initiative, Mrs Gandhi has pre-empted the volatile and emotive Centre-state relations question from becoming a searing issue at the next poll. She has been taking her own time, however, to announce the other members of the Sarkaria Commission and its terms of reference. Her go-slow stance on the Sarkaria Commission may suggest that she would like to use it to keep the Centre-state relations issue under the lid until the middle of 1985—which would indicate that she hasn't made up her mind about the necessity of a mid-term poll.

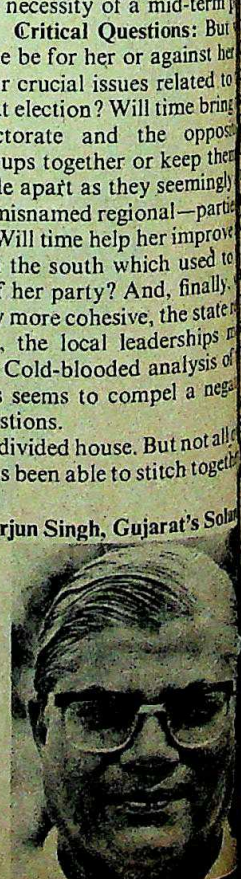
Critical Questions: But will time be for her or against her? Will four crucial issues related to the next election? Will time bring the electorate and the opposition groups together or keep them as wide apart as they seemingly are now? Will time not help other local—misnamed regional—parties come up, especially in Maharashtra? Will time help her improve her presently bleak electoral prospects in the south which used to be until January 1983, the stronghold of her party? And, finally, will time enable her to make her own party more cohesive, the state machines less corrupt and more efficient, the local leaderships more worthy of the trust of the electorate? Cold-blooded analysis of existing conditions and future trends seems to compel a negative answer to each one of these four questions.

The Opposition remains a deeply divided house. But not all of the country. In Orissa, Biju Patnaik has been able to stitch togeth

(From left) Orissa's Patnaik, Madhya Pradesh's Arjun Singh, Gujarat's Sola







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united platform to take on a faction-ridden, bitterly divided Congress(I) party. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), at the meeting of its national council in April, apart from issuing documents which look like an election manifesto, resolved to unite all non-communist opposition groups to fight the next poll. Mrs Gandhi's great assets in the opposition camps are Morarji Desai, Chaudhuri Charan Singh and Raj Narain. It is quite possible that time will be a plus point for the opposition groups and a minus point for the Congress(I).

Time may very well see the emergence of powerful local parties in a number of states slated for election in mid-1985. Sharad Joshi, the peasant leader, has been stomping all over Maharashtra organising a party of the peasantry down at the grass roots; reports suggest that the response he is getting from the rural population is truly encouraging. In Gujarat, the Rashtriya Congress party proclaimed by Ratubhai Adani. Mahipatrai Mehta and their followers in December 1982, could gather a lot of public support given two years to build its organisation all over the state. Time may enable the assorted opposition factions to combine in Bihar against the Congress(I).

The pattern of opposition unity will be different at the next poll from what it was in 1977. Opposition groups will come together at the local level in a number of states rather than at the national level. Local leaders find it easier to compose their differences, as their unity efforts are spurred by the genuine possibility of wresting power from the Congress(I). The model is the Janata experiment in Karnataka.

IN THE south the Congress(I) is in a state of decomposition in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. If Mrs Gandhi cannot arrest the rot soon, she may never be able to do so. In 1980, her party fought the parliamentary poll in Tamil Nadu in alliance with the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the Muslim League. The alliance won 37 Lok Sabha seats, yielding only two to the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party. But in six months, the tide turned against the Congress-DMK alliance which was squarely defeated by the AIADMK in the state elections. Since then, DMK has been steadily disintegrating. Many of its ranking leaders have joined the AIADMK. In two Lok Sabha by-elections in 1982, the Congress(I) candidates lost their security deposits. The second debacle at Periakulam led to the immediate dissolution of the Congress(I) state committee in Tamil Nadu and the appointment of Margatham Chandrasekhar as acting president of a newly contrived Tamil Nadu Congress Committee(I) (TNCC-I). The crushing of the Congress(I) in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka last January has given birth to a Spirit of the South. The new ambience will make it difficult for Mrs Gandhi to come to arrangements with any of the major southern states. Mrs Gandhi will not find it easy to drum up electoral pacts with any ruling local party. Nor are the Telugu Desam and Janata governments in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka likely to make themselves so unpopular in the next two years as to enable Mrs Gandhi to reap a handsome election harvest in the south.

By and large therefore, Mrs Gandhi must depend upon the states north of the Vindhyas to win a stable majority in the next Lok Sabha. In none of these states, however, is her party in good shape. In Orissa Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik has his arch rival in K.C. Lenka, a cabinet colleague, while the state Congress(I) committee has two working presidents, one hostile to the chief minister and the other loyal to him. Meanwhile, the mustard oil scandal has compelled even the pro-Congress(I) *Hindustan Times* to ask for Patnaik's head. In Madhya Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Shivbhanu Solanki has openly assumed leadership of opponents to Chief Minister Arjun Singh. In Gujarat, Adani who had stood solidly behind Mrs Gandhi since 1969 and who had built the Congress(I) from the shambles is now irrevocably pitted against Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki. There is more than one chink in the armour of Rajasthan Chief Minister Shiv Charan Mathur.

In Bihar, Chief Minister Dr Jagannath has sacked eleven ministers without even a semblance of consultation with the "High Command." Two All India Congress(I) Committee (AICC-I) observers have been to Patna in vain efforts to restore unity. There has been a lot of talk about Jagannath Mishra being replaced. In Uttar Pradesh, a lacklustre Chief Minister, Sripat Mishra, is still to complete his first year in office. Nobody has the slightest confidence that he can lead his party to a decisive victory.

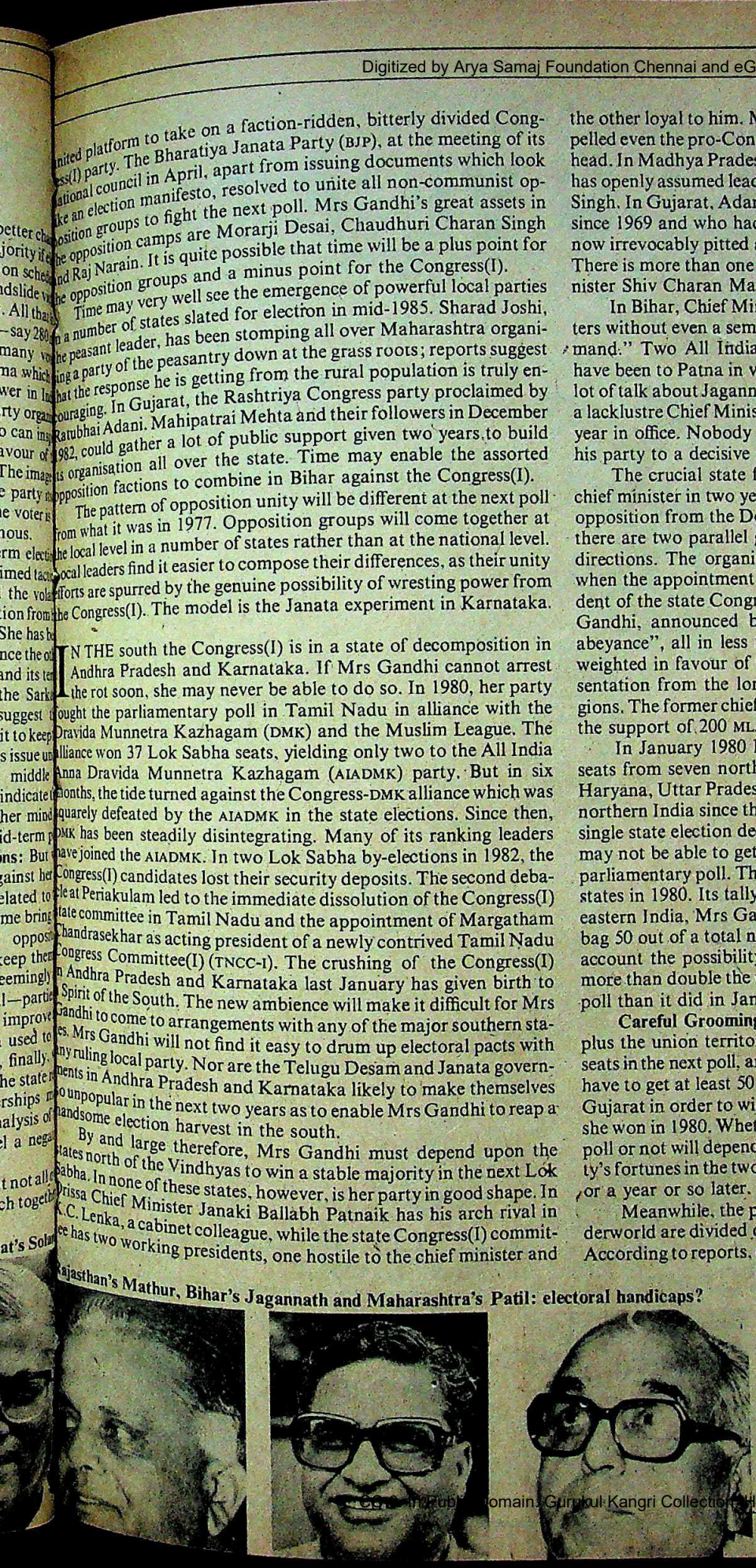
The crucial state for Indira Gandhi is Maharashtra. Its third chief minister in two years, Vasantdada Patil, is severely crippled by opposition from the Deputy Chief Minister, Ramrao Adik. In fact, there are two parallel governments in the state pulling in different directions. The organisational disarray was dramatised in March when the appointment of S.M.I. Aseer, a former minister, as president of the state Congress(I) Committee was "approved" by Indira Gandhi, announced by Kamalapati Tripathi and then "held in abeyance", all in less than six hours. The Patil Cabinet is heavily weighted in favour of western Maharashtra, with very poor representation from the long-neglected Marathwada and Vidarbha regions. The former chief minister A.R. Antulay still reportedly claims the support of 200 MLA's.

In January 1980 Mrs Gandhi won 154 of the 231 Lok Sabha seats from seven north Indian states—Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. In northern India since then the Congress(I) has not been able to win a single state election decisively. On a generous estimate Mrs Gandhi may not be able to get more than 120 seats in the north in the next parliamentary poll. The Congress(I) bagged 93 seats in the southern states in 1980. Its tally in 1984 or 1985 cannot be more than 45. In eastern India, Mrs Gandhi should consider herself lucky if she can bag 50 out of a total number of 68 Lok Sabha seats. This takes into account the possibility of the Left Front in West Bengal yielding more than double the number of seats to the Congress(I) in the next poll than it did in January 1980.

Careful Grooming: The southern, northern and eastern states plus the union territories may not get Mrs Gandhi more than 223 seats in the next poll, and this is a generous forecast. She will therefore have to get at least 50 seats out of a total of 74 in Maharashtra and Gujarat in order to win a majority, which will be 14 fewer than what she won in 1980. Whether Mrs Gandhi decides to call for a mid-term poll or not will depend almost entirely on how she estimates her party's fortunes in the two vital western states in January-February 1984 or a year or so later.

Meanwhile, the petty chieftains of the Congress(I) political underworld are divided on how to groom Rajiv Gandhi for succession. According to reports, one school wants him to be installed as a cabinet minister in the next impending reshuffle so that he can earn the required experience and legitimacy for succession. Another faction would like to see Rajiv Gandhi elected leader of the Congress(I) parliamentary party after the next poll, and Indira Gandhi elevated to the presidency. Most of Mrs Gandhi's men are obviously suffering from acute astigmatism. They can only hope that she and Rajiv Gandhi are not.

Rajasthan's Mathur, Bihar's Jagannath and Maharashtra's Patil: electoral handicaps?



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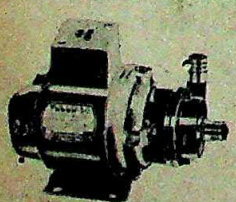

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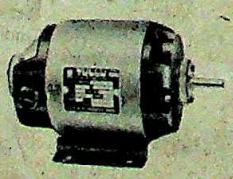

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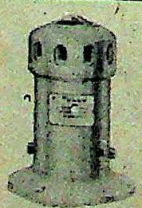
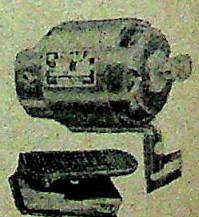


Siren



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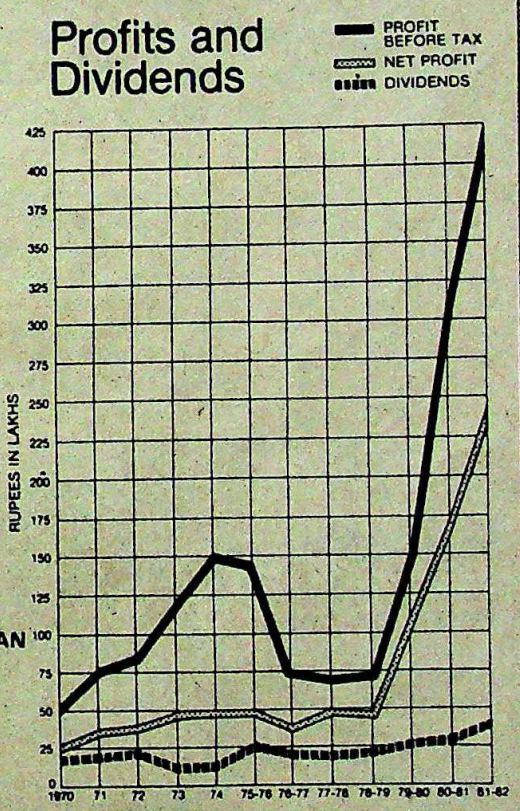

THE TRACK RECORD OVER A 10 YEAR SPAN

	Equity Rs/Lakhs	Reserves Rs/Lakhs	Net earning per ordinary share of Rs. 10 Rs P.
1972	100	177.54	4.04
1973	100	203.34	4.58
*1974	160	176.82	2.90
1975-76	160	184.98	2.95 (15 months)
1976-77	160	202.74	2.24
1977-78	160	228 77	2.96
1978-79	160	253.75	2.76
1979-80	160	338.04	6.79
1980-81	160	476.61	10.46
** 1981-82	240	602.28	10.14

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CANADA

The Invisible Aliens

FOR THE last four years, Ajit Singh, an illegal immigrant in Canada who does not want his real name disclosed, has lived the life of a hunted man. "I am a bundle of nerves," he says, tapping his fingers nervously on the table. "I have endured this ordeal of playing hide-and-seek for more than four years." He works nights in a sleazy Punjabi dhaba-type restaurant, one eye always on the door. He recalls an evening when immigration investigators entered through the front door of the restaurant and he escaped through the back door.

Singh entered Canada after jumping a ship and has since been living in the country under various assumed names and has been frequently obliged to change his residence to escape detection. Now he admits that he's at the end of his tether. "If there is no general or conditional amnesty granted," he said, "I might have to give myself up."

Singh is only one of an estimated 200,000 illegal immigrants in Canada who have patiently waited for years for an amnesty plan, their only hope of getting away from menial jobs in shanty cafés, hotels, farms and domestic services. But the proposed amnesty plan is now in danger of either being scuttled by the bureaucrats or modified to such an extent that those for whom it was intended may never come forward voluntarily to disclose their presence in the country.

Amnesty Recommendations: Last December, the Canadian Employment and Immigration Advisory Council finalised its report on illegal immigrants in the country and one of its recommendations was to institute a conditional settlement programme whereby persons living in the country, without a legal status, on or before July 1, 1982 could be granted temporary residence permits for a probationary period of six years and thereafter accorded legal immigrant status, provided there were no criminal charges against them. For the 200,000 illegal immigrants, including about 10,000 of Indian origin, the council's recommendations were a godsend.

The proposed amnesty plan is now in danger of either being scuttled by the bureaucrats or modified to such an extent that those for whom it was intended may never come forward voluntarily to disclose their presence in the country.

The council pointed out that in most cases illegal immigrants were "living in fear, having no rights and being potentially subject to exploitation" and the only hope for these people was to secure citizenship. Unless something was done immediately to remedy the situation, it said, the problem would soon reach uncontrollable proportions. W.G. Robinson, a former director of the Liberal Party and chairman of a federal task force that studied immigration procedures in 1980, was appointed by Employment and Immigration Minister Lloyd Axworthy to study the amnesty plan and recommend ways of tightening immigration laws.

However, weeks before Robinson's report is due, he has already released a preliminary assessment paper that considerably modifies the amnesty plan. His paper states flatly that the estimate of 200,000 illegal immigrants "has been challenged with considerable force". Commenting on Robinson's paper, Vital Ducharme, executive director of the council said: "He's taken a view very close to the department's view—that if you don't hear from them they're not there."

Reassessment: What many of the illegal immigrants in Canada are worrying about

UNITED KINGDOM

Inner Voices

FOR THE first time, two Indian women have been chosen to represent Britain's Labour and Conservative parties in the next elections. Pramila Le Hunt (*nee* Lal), one-time *Femina* contributor and mother of four, was selected this March as the Tory candidate from among 40 rivals for a Birmingham constituency. Rita Austin, daughter of a former Attorney-General of India, Niren De, is the Labour candidate for St Albans, a small town outside London.

Le Hunt, married to an Englishman and head of the English Department at a posh London private school, said: "I was not surprised they chose me. I joined the Conservative party in 1976 because I felt very strongly about my children's future, and from very early on I decided to take on a political role rather than research or committee work." Educated at Loreto school in Calcutta, then Calcutta University and later Cambridge where she read English, Le Hunt has been actively working with the Asian community in Southall. "If I get to Parliament I will examine the training and employment opportunities for young people, particularly Asians," said the soft-spoken Tory candidate. "I think the first generation of Asian immigrants to this country should also be settled well here in terms of pension, welfare and health care, for after all they were asked to come to Britain by employers looking for cheap labour. It is better to have an Asian voice persuading from within than protesting voices from outside," she added.

Asian Thrust: Labour party candidate Rita Austin also went to Loreto school in Calcutta. She arrived in England in 1955 on a scholarship to Oxford but gave up studies to marry an Englishman. Says Austin: "My father was active in West Bengal politics but gave up all idea of ever holding office in the Emergency period. He took a keen interest in Labour politics in Britain and it was only natural that I should join the Labour party in time." Austin, 43, who has two children aged 14 and 11, works as an educational administrator with the Council for National Academic Awards in London. She has been an active member of the local Community Relations Council and sees herself as quite close to immigrant groups in the area. St Albans, her prospective constituency, has a small Asian population, mainly semi-professional Bengali and Bangladeshi settlers. Says Austin: "I am particularly eager to improve the lot of Asian women in this country. They really are to be pitied.

Le Hunt (left) and Austin: pioneers

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are the other observations in Robinson's assessment paper. For instance, it notes that a previous amnesty in 1973 granted by the Federal Government was announced as "a last chance". The situation then was "out of control" and there was wide support for clearing up the immigration mess. "It is, at least, questionable whether the circumstances (now) are such that a general amnesty would gain any significant level of public support," the paper says. "There is no visible crisis and there are no major changes contemplated in the rules of the game."

The paper further pointed out that illegal immigrants could have a "ripple" effect once they become 'landed' and are able to bring in relatives. Also, those who immigrated legally might feel discriminated against. "The general integrity and credibility of our immigration process could be put into serious question," the paper said. "Mere rumours of amnesty could trigger the movement of thousands of would-be illegal immigrants to enter Canada. If Canada were to grant another general amnesty and to say, again, that this would be the last one, would anyone believe us?"

Frustrated Aliens: Meanwhile the illegal alien community is aghast. Surjit Singh is one of them. He has a job as a mechanic in Vancouver. "I work more than 15 hours a day, six days a week, get less than half the wages I should receive and there is always the lurking fear of being caught and deported." He longs for his native Punjab but does not have the money to go back.

Annamma Thomas (not her real name) of Montreal arrived on a visitor's permit five years ago and has since worked as a housekeeper. "I live in a cubicle in the basement of the house. I get my mail in double sealed covers addressed to the lady of the house and for months I never even step outside the place." She has a master's degree but at times she has to even sexually oblige people. "If I don't," she said, in tears, "I could be on the road the very next morning."

Iqbal Khan of Toronto is as frustrated. "It is pathetic to be illegally in a country. You are not a normal human being. If someone beats you on the street, you cannot call the police for help. If you are sick you cannot go to the hospital and have to depend on the generosity of friends and relatives to get you the medicines. If you witness an accident, you scurry before the police arrives."

An ethnic leader feels that although the Government is looking around for a solution, it is ignoring the causes in its own system that lead to this malaise—the frustrating delays in processing applications, lack of control at the borders and above all, the unscrupulous travel agents who bring in these people and find them illegal jobs.

For the Canadian immigration service, cleaning up its own Augean stables is a Herculean task. If it grants amnesty, as it did in 1973 and legalised the status of some 50,000 people, it fears the move may further attract more illegal aliens. And if it does not, the situation may become a major political headache.

—SURESH JAIN

specially women who come from Bangladesh. Their living and working conditions are absolutely appalling."

This is not the first time that the Tories or the Labour party have selected Asian candidates for election to Parliament. But it is the first time an Asian woman has been chosen by either party. In the 1979 elections the Conservative party fielded two Asian candidates, Narendra Swarup and Farouq Saleem, unsuccessfully. The Labour party is fielding eight black or Asian candidates for the next election, among them a former Sri Lankan.

Electoral Chances: Will Austin and Le Hunt go to the commons? Neither was willing to speculate. Le Hunt will be the Tory candidate contesting what is considered to be a safe Labour seat though the sitting Labour MP has not been reselected for the coming election. Paradoxically, Le Hunt's chances will be boosted because Birmingham's Asian businessmen and low-paid workers have also been adversely affected by Britain's economic climate. In St Albans the sitting Conservative MP had a majority of 17,000 in the last elections and Rita Austin faces a hard battle. The last successful Indians to sit in the British Parliament were M.M. Bhownagree who represented the Conservatives from 1895–1906, Dadabhai Naoroji who was a Liberal MP from 1892–1895 and Shapurji Saklatvala, Communist MP in 1923.

Le Hunt for one would like to see more Asian representation in the British Parliament. "I feel people like me who have adapted to life in Britain can represent both the Asian and British communities equally well." How does she intend to deal with the anti-immigration-repatriation-minded Tory right wing? Said Le Hunt: "If you're a credible voice and explain things, then you can help to temper the opinions of the Conservative party right wing. I, for one, felt very strongly about the fiance issue and wrote to the minister concerned. I don't think the rights of Asian women should be ignored." And if Hunt and Austin do win, the battle would have just started.

—BONNY MUKHERJEE

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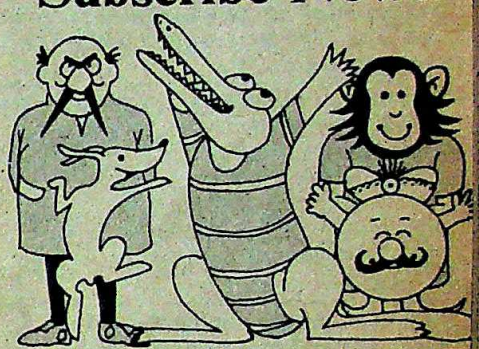

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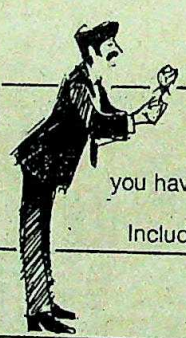

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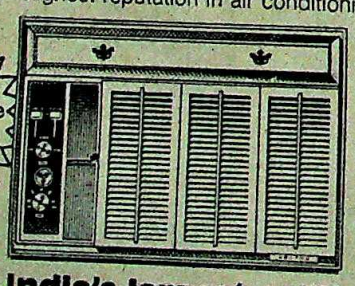

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BANGLADESH

Banking On Islam

THE SIGNBOARD in Arabic reads "Allah has permitted trade and prohibited *riba* (usury)". Last fortnight, the Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited opened its doors to the faithful in Dhaka's downtown Motijheel locality. Its brochure assures that it will "guide, guarantee and patronise the way of *halal* earnings through a system of *halal* investment free from interest in any form".

Diverging from interest-based conventional banking, the bank will share the profits and losses arising from its investments with the account holders. In consultation with a *sariah* board of Islamic theologists, the bank will make investments on a partnership basis in projects which conform with Islamic principles. Says the bank manager: "Whatever the profit, we shall not make investment in any project concerning wine and luxury items which is contrary to Islamic principles or is prohibited under Islamic laws. We shall give priority to projects for the production of essential goods."

The first account being opened at the Islami Bank

The first of its kind in Bangladesh, the Islami Bank will be formally inaugurated only in July this year, although it has already started working. It will have an authorised capital of US $20.83 million and a paid-up capital of $3.33 million. Foreign sponsors, largely from Islamic countries in the Middle East, have contributed about $2.2 million; and local sponsors about $5 lakh. The remaining amount has come from contributions by the Bangladesh Government and public subscription.

Devout Clientele: The bank's clientele will be primarily drawn from large numbers of the devout who are currently declining to accept interest on their savings bank accounts with conventional commercial banks. Already, more than 100 Muslims have opened their accounts with the Islami Bank which, for the moment, is entertaining current accounts only. Savings deposits will follow when the bank gets fully under way. The bank plans to open three more branches in the current year—one each in Chittagong, the prosperous Sylhet district and the Khulna divisional headquarters.

The boom in banking is a recent phenomenon which has followed the Government's efforts to boost the ailing economy by encouraging private sector entrepreneurs. While the pace of investment in the industrial sector has remained sluggish, two other commercial banks—the Citibank and the National Bank Limited—also opened last fortnight. The total number of banks has thus risen to 12 in the private sector as against six nationalised commercial banks and five specialised financial institutions.

This spate of activity has brought uneasiness in its wake. Recently, a private sector bank set up a year ago, decided to cut its declared salary bill by 30 per cent due to financial constraints. Financial experts point out that a commercial bank can function properly only if it can ensure a minimum deposit of Taka 25 crore (Rs 10 crore). However, due to persistent global recession, the quantum of real investment has plummeted in the last few years. Since major investments like agriculture, industrial and house building are exclusively controlled by the Government, they are consistently bagged by the six nationalised banks. Only commercial investments are open for competition among private, public and foreign banks.

Clearly, deposit mobilisation remains an uphill task for all new banks in the private sector. Though the Islami Bank maintains a sunny outlook on the future because of assured aid from other Islamic banks abroad, its success will largely depend on the selection of projects it chooses to finance.

—IHSANUL KARIM in Dhaka

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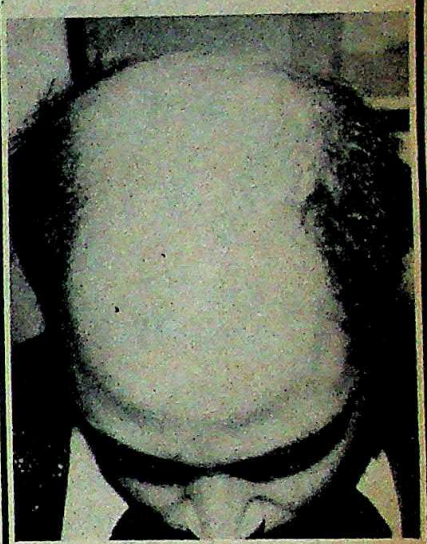

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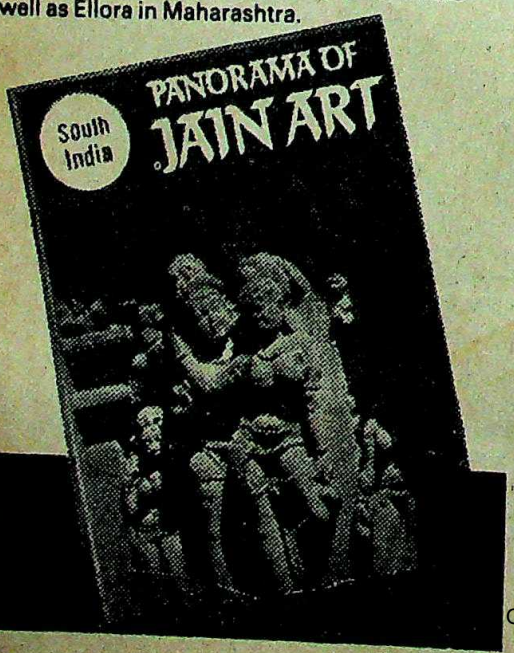

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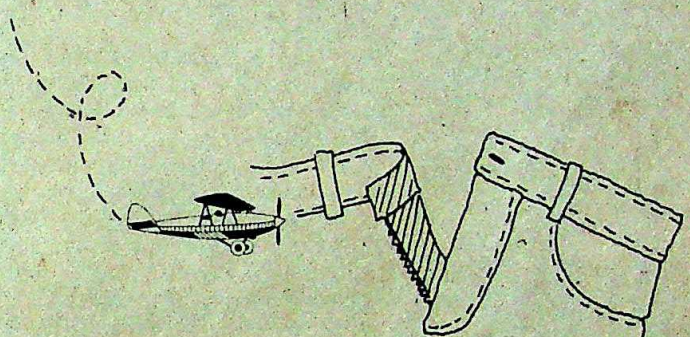

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ELECTRO-HOMEOPATHY

Special Treatment

IT IS a "system of medicine" that is practically unheard of outside Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. But in the last 10 years electro-homeopathy, as this system styles itself, has become all the rage in the two states. At a conservative estimate there are now said to be 30,000 practitioners 'qualified' in its mysterious ways.

Nobody is very forthcoming about how these 30,000 practitioners have been trained. Last fortnight detectives were busy running to ground the men running a large-scale

An electro-homeopath shuts shop in Patna

racket in fake degrees. In Delhi the police arrested two men and seized a large number of admission forms, forged degrees and certificates, that were being given out generously by an organisation that styled itself the Prakash Shiksha Parishad.

Big Business: This, however, is only one aspect of the story. The actual degrees that are awarded by scores of institutes that have sprung up in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are worth little more than the forged ones. They are awarded after a minimum of organised study and in most cases after a very perfunctory examination. For some time now Bihar Department of Health has been trying to curb the proliferation of institutions. Last year the department put out advertisements in local Hindi newspapers warning against such institutions. The advertisement specifically named three institutes that were distributing degrees and manufacturing and distributing homeopathic medicines. It concluded sternly "through illegal means these institutions are making money by misleading the public inside and outside the state." For its trouble the department got a spate of legal notices from several institutions.

At almost the same time the Central Council for Homeopathy also took up cudgels against the new tribe of electro-homeopaths by writing to the state governments of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh asking them to take immediate steps to close down institutions advertising that they taught electro-homeopathy. The council pointed out that there was no such recognised system of medicine. It also suggested that legislation should be introduced to curb such institutions.

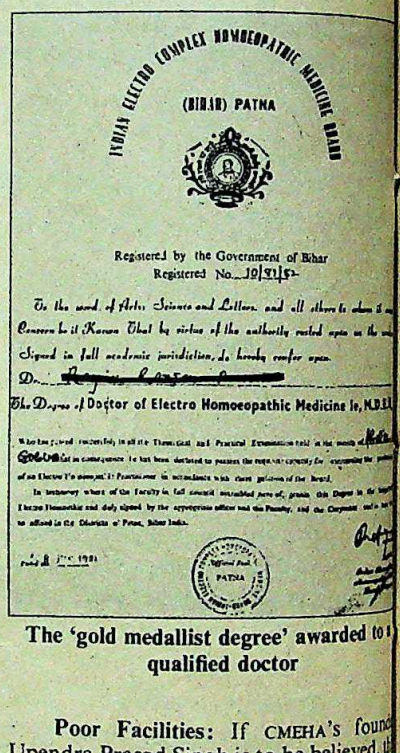
The state authorities would probably have been only too happy to follow this advice if they could. They find, however, that their hands are bound as they do not know exactly how to proceed against the electro-homeopaths. Says R.S. Singh, joint secretary in the Department of Health of the Bihar Government: "We have alerted all district magistrates to keep an eye on the activities of such institutions but we are unable to do anything more as all such institutions have got themselves registered under the Registration of Societies Act."

In Uttar Pradesh the man charged with handling the problem, Director of Homeopathy, A.C. Saxena, adds in a similar vein: "It's a legal battle. Taking advantage of the Societies Act people get together and open medical degree shops. This cannot be checked unless a Central act or an ordinance is promulgated by the Government banning such professional organisations.

Harmless Treatment: Another fact that weighs in favour of the electro-homeopaths is that there is no evidence that anybody has ever been harmed by an electro-homeopath. Its practitioners believe their medicines cure by using such forces as light, heat, magnetism, electricity—hence the word electro—obtained from vegetable sources. The prescriptions apparently contain little more than plants, sugar, alcohol and water.

Both in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh officials say that electro-homeopathy got a boost after the Government took over homeopathy education. Now there are nearly a dozen institutions in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh which dole out degrees and registration certificates for anybody who wishes to practise electro-homeopathy. Most of these institutions are concentrated in two cities—Patna and Kanpur.

Exactly what training these institutions provide is not certain, but hardly any of them seems to have any training facilities worth the name. In Patna the Count Mata Electro-Homeopathy Association (CMEHA) was one of the first institutions to be set up. The association was registered in 19[illegible] and soon afterwards the Count Mata Electro Medical College and Hospital was set up. In the following years the Herbal University of Electro-Complex, the Board of Electro-Homeopathy Medicines of Bihar and something called the 'Cancer Hospital' were set up. All these five institutions function out of a small two-room house in Patna.



The 'gold medallist degree' awarded to a qualified doctor

Poor Facilities: If CMEHA's founder Upendra Prasad Singh is to be believed, this tiny house is the hub of a phenomenal amount of activity. Each year the Herbal University turns out 200 graduates. So far the institute has turned out 1,800 graduates. Singh says that the university has 26 colleges under it outside Patna. The teaching, however, does seem to leave a lot to be desired. The institute has no hospital facilities so its pupils admittedly never get to trying out their arts before they get their degrees. The university has only eight part-time teachers who turn up as and when they are invited to hold a lecture. The students also do not appear to attend very regularly; most have full-time jobs.

The story is much the same in the other institutes in Patna. The Council of Electro-Homeopathic System of Medicine, another of the city's older institutions, operates from

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its headquarters in a side lane in the suburb of Dariyapur. Another institute is run by S.N. Jha, a railway employee, from a one-room shop in Yarpur. Jha has not had his society registered yet.

Kanpur's institutes are also run in the same style. The most prominent of the institutes is the Board of Electro-Homeopathic Medicine (Uttar Pradesh). The organisation has the backing of a well-connected Congress(I) MP Sibtey Razi. Again it operates from a one-room house in Kanpur that houses four other organisations. One of these organisations is the recently opened National Electro-Homeopaths Cooperative Credit Society. Its Chairman, M.H. Idrisi, says that the institute has about 20 affiliated colleges in different districts and outside and last year it brought out a gazette listing the 984 practitioners who are registered with it. Idrisi claims that other boards and councils in backward areas are giving electro-homeopathy a bad name.

Saxena says that there are about 36 other institutions who are giving out certificates. Uttar Pradesh also has a new innovation to its credit. The institutions give out an M.A. degree—the letters standing for medical advisor.

Easy Admissions: All these institutes have fairly lax rules. Upendra Prasad Singh admits that students are registered on the basis of 'recommendations' by mukhiyas, medical officers, MLA's and others certifying that the candidate has been practising electro-homeopathy. The Herbal University prospectus also makes it obvious that the examination is somewhat flexible by saying, "The rules of examination can be changed from time to time." Sometimes degrees are also given out as a special favour. One Patna doctor recently got a rude shock when he received a 'gold medallist degree' from one of the boards operating in the state capital. The doctor says he knows nothing about electro-homeopathy and has never appeared for an examination in the field.

The homeopathic institutes are hardly run for charity. On a rough estimate it costs anywhere between Rs 1,000 and Rs 2,000 to get a degree. The cost of a degree appears to vary according to the candidate's capacity to pay. S.N. Jha says that most institutes ask their candidates for various donations. He adds that people often arrive at the institutes and collect blank registration forms. These are later given away to people who may want them.

But for the time being electro-homeopathy flourishes. Until the Government comes up with a way of curbing these associations they continue to make money—needless to say at the expense of the public.

—FARZAND AHMED

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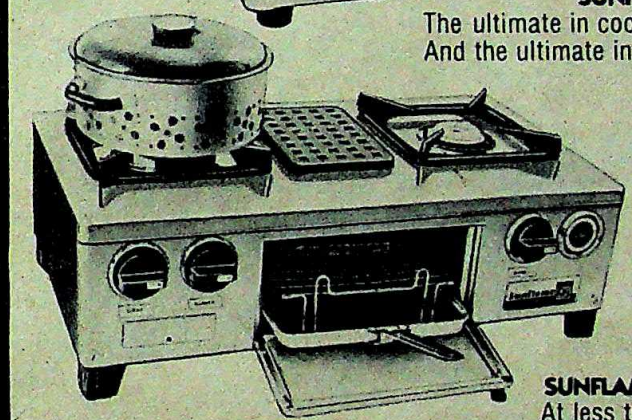

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CALCUTTA

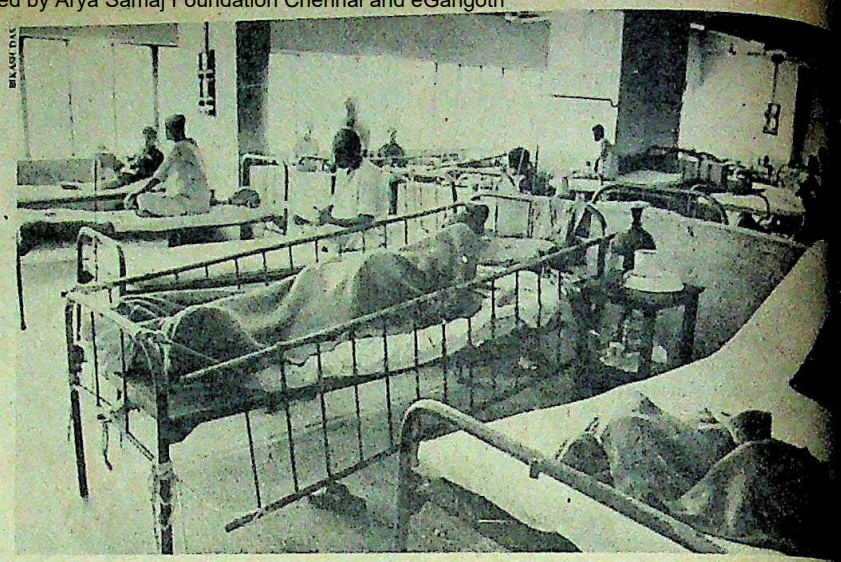
Critical Condition

CALCUTTA'S Nilratan Sircar Medical College and Hospital, the biggest in West Bengal, is facing an unusual problem: it is a hospital without medicines. Recently, as it stopped admissions and closed its emergency department for 48 hours, the junior doctors, caught between the non-availability of medicines and the patients' wrath, threatened to launch a full-scale agitation against hospital authorities if they did not make medicines freely available. Said Joydeb Pathak, a house surgeon and a spokesman for the All Bengal Junior Doctors Federation: "There are about 3,000 of us all over the state and we are even thinking of submitting our resignations *en masse* if no steps are taken to improve this ridiculous situation of having hospitals and no medicine."

The response from the Left Front Ministry to this critical situation smacks unfortunately of the usual bureaucratic indifference. "The shortage of medicine is an all-India phenomenon and it has affected Nilratan Sircar also," said West Bengal's Marxist Health Minister Ambarish Mukherjee. "But the situation could not have been so bad that the house staff and internees should have agitated and closed down the emergency department. I feel it was done with a political motive to embarrass the Left Front Ministry," continued Mukherjee, probably unaware of the fact that the closure was ordered by the hospital superintendent himself.

Ram Narayan Goswami, Mukherjee's colleague in the Government went a step further when he threatened that the agitating junior doctors would not be given their completion certificates, thereby indicating that while he was keen to deal with the agitation, he had no time to understand the reasons behind it. Ultimately, the chief minister intervened with an advance of Rs 10 lakh to the hospital to buy some medicines and get going again.

Financial Constraints: But Rs 10 lakh is not going to lift the hospital out of the mess it is in. Already Nilratan Sircar owes Rs 86 lakh to different drug companies, most of which are no longer keen on supplying medicines to the hospital. Said a spokesman of a multinational drug company: "The hospital owes us Rs 75,000. While for obvious reasons we cannot tell them that we will not supply any more medicines, we are forced these days to say that we have run out of stock of the brands they ask for. After all we also have to be in business."



Patients in the hospital: desperate situation

Because of these financial constraints, Calcutta's largest hospital has no facilities for operating the X-ray machine at the emergency department on week-ends as there are not enough technicians. There is no ECG machine in the emergency wing, so a patient brought in with a heart attack can in no way be immediately attended to, unless he is admitted to the cardiology department which is not always possible. Moreover, the hospital does not have regular supplies of penicillin injections and medicines like Flagyl and Avil and neither is there any supply of sorbitrates. Patients are supposed to get all these drugs free, according to Pathak, but because of non-availability, they have to buy them from outside. Ambarish Mukherjee, however, feels differently: "There is a tendency to use drugs indiscriminately and 15 per cent of the total diseases in the country are due to drug abuses. We cannot allow this to happen."

Disappointed Patients: The financial sob-story of the hospital authorities does not satisfy the over 5,000 people who crowd the out-patient department every day. With the constant pruning of the budget—Nilratan Sircar's budget was reduced from Rs 2 crore in 1981–82 to Rs 1.5 crore in 1982–83— large numbers of people have to return without the medicine they had expected to get in a government hospital. Suleiman Sheikh, who had come all the way by train from a remote village in 24-Parganas district clutching a prescription is one. "The *daktarbabu* (doctor) has told me to buy this from any shop in this area," he said, "but I have nothing more than my return fare. What will I do now?"

No Improvement: With only 17 per cent of the total health budget being used to purchase medicine and equipment, the situation shows little signs of improving. Since Nilratan Sircar is situated in Calcutta's congested Sealdah area, it caters almost wholly to a low-income community, most of whom can neither buy the prescribed medicines nor follow doctors' advice for a high protein diet. Ministers, however, are invariably treated in the Woodburn ward of Seth Sukhlal Karnani Memorial Hospital, worlds apart from the chaotic government hospitals.

The Government, meanwhile, has found its own solution. Hospital authorities are trying to switch over from the system of calling drugs by their trade names and referring to them by their generic names. Says Ambarish Mukherjee: "If the drugs are not called by their trade names then they would have any resale value and pilferage from hospitals will be curtailed." But, whether putting the same medicine in a new bottle will have any effect is doubtful. As Pathak pointed out: "The pilferage is not done by outsiders, it is people within the hospital who are involved and it should not take them very long to identify the drugs by their trade names and carry on with the business."

While the government authorities and the junior doctors continue passing the buck, millions of West Bengal's poor have no place to take their ailments. The situation is best summed up by a leading government doctor who said last fortnight: "I will be the first person to get admitted to the very place where I work."

—SUMANTA

Health Minister Mukherjee: indifferent

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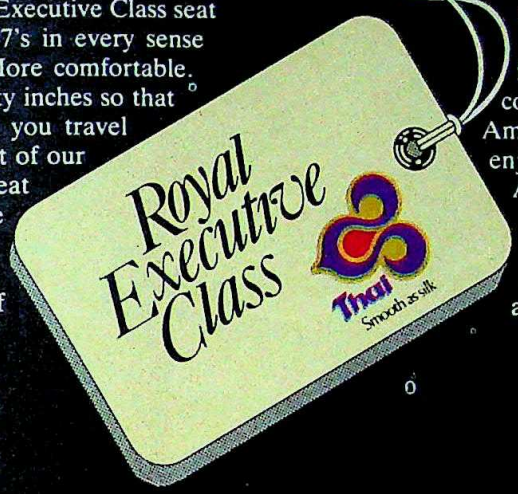

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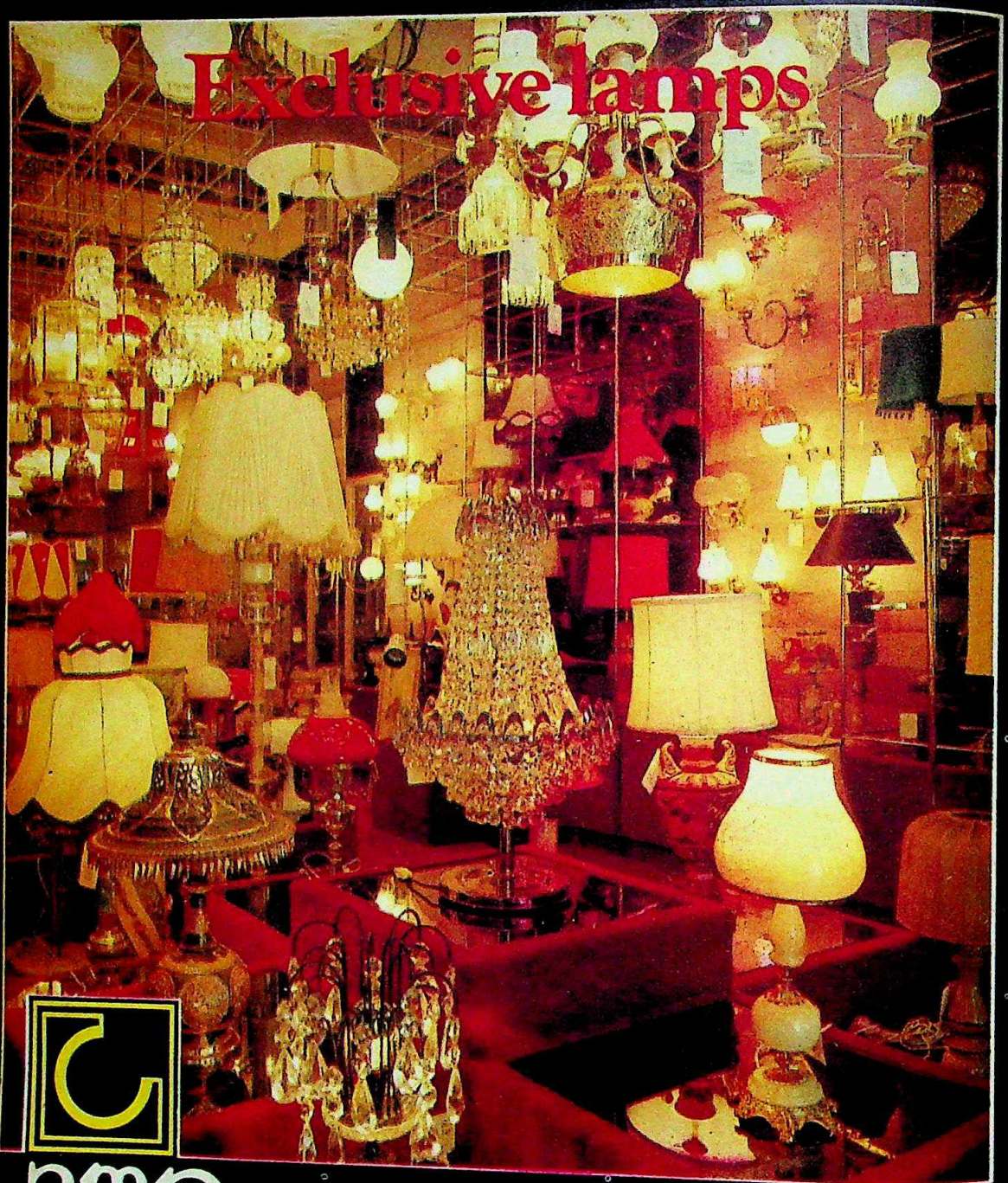

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COP AND ROBBER

■ If you can't lick 'em, join 'em. That's what intelligent robbers do, instead of heading for the hills and hiding in a dusty old ravine and cutting off Sanjeev Kumar's arms *a la Sholay*. Recenly, Vachlibit village in Baroda district, Gujarat, reverberated to shouts of strong men, mostly dacoits, practising their profession. They got away with a fair amount of loot and the police, as usual, arrived too late to do anything except drive round in circles. The dacoits were presumed to have ridden off into the sunset until state Home Minister Prabodh Raval made some startling revelations in the Assembly.

One of the dacoits, it seemed, had turned up at a police recruiting bureau soon after the theft. In no time at all, he was strutting about in uniform. He would probably have gone on being a policeman if in the course of their investigations the police had not discovered that they had a wolf in sheep's clothing in their midst and promptly piled on him. They also recovered part of the loot from the sarpanch of the village. The recruiting bureau is now subjecting all aspirants to a rather uncomfortable scrutiny.

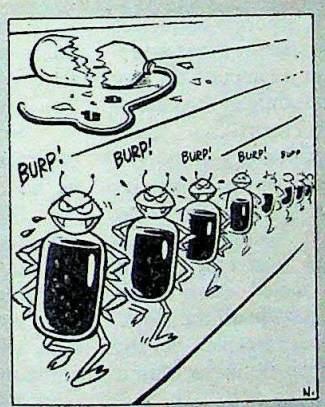
PEON POWER

■ Everybody knows how powerful are the peons who sit chewing *paan* outside officers' rooms. A spurt of *paan* juice to the left or the right could give or cut off access to the Power inside. Just how omnipotent these ubiquitous messengers are came to light in Sankeshwar, a town in Karnataka, last fortnight.

S. Somnath, assistant commissioner, Belgaum, was in Sankeshwar to decide the allotment of 30 'janata' houses. He was handed a sheaf of application forms. However, Somnath smelt a rat when he found that there were too few forms. He asked around and discovered that, apparently, none of the officers of the municipality had any say in the allotment of houses; it was a humble and insignificant municipal peon who scanned the applications.

In fact, when Somnath probed further, he found that the peon had been having a merry time accepting or rejecting—mostly rejecting—the pleas for a 'janata' house. The house allotment meeting was hastily postponed while officials tried to work out just how a peon had managed to muscle in on their territory.

BLOOD LUST



■ Statisticians have their own way of telling the truth, and their own way of finding it. Last fortnight, one of them spent a night in a hospital in Rajasthan and came up with some blood-curdling figures about, er, blood. He wanted to find out how much blood bedbugs gorge themselves on in the state's hospitals and he sat all night by the bed of one patient, watching the little pests as they went about their feast.

When he stretched his arms as purple dawn crept softly over the hill, he had counted 25 bugs ministering to the patient. Each had drunk 0.05 cc of blood. The 600-bed hospital had about 300 patients and an equal number of staff and the statistician calculated that the bugs sucked about 1,200 cc or five bottles of blood a day which added up to about 1,800 bottles a year. The yearly blood turnover of the hospital's blood bank is about 2,000 bottles.

Few hospitals have blood banks, but most have bugs and hence the bugs are sucking more blood than the banks can replace. In fact, concluded the statistician, over 15,000 bottles of blood were lost every year to bugs in the 190 hospitals of the state. If this kind of thing continues, Rajasthan should be renamed Tran-sylvania.

TOILET TRAINING

■ The police in India can sometimes be quite diligent about their job. Proof comes from Bombay where they fought a five-hour battle with a septic tank to recover stolen property. The story began when a plumber sneaked cash, an ear-ring and a pair of gold bangles from a lady's vanity case. The cash he hid in the toilet of a nearby flat, the ear-ring went to the bottom of a pond, and the bangles he wrapped in a handkerchief and threw into the septic tank of a public lavatory.

If he thought that the rather unhygienic hiding places would deter the law he was sadly mistaken. The cash and the ear-ring were speedily recovered. But the bangles.... "Okay, boys, roll up them sleeves real high, and here are some clothes-pegs to close your nostrils with...You wouldn't think people used public lavatories so often, would you?...there, I think I see them but I don't think any lady is ever going to use that handkerchief again. Come to think of it, I'd be surprised if she put on the bangles again ...Right, let's go home and have a bath...or two...or three..." A heady aroma still lingers around the police station.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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Swraj Paul, founder and chairman of the Caparo Group: playing for high stakes

INDIAN COMPANIES

The Great Takeover Scare

IT HAD all the elements of blockbuster drama: a foreign predator swinging into battle with lots of hard cash, blue blooded industrial families fighting to save their beloved empires, hints of intra-family treachery, power play in the prime minister's home, and overtones of political scores being settled by proxy on the corporate battlefield. There were angry fulminations from one corner, a mixture of gloom and defiance in the other and, as the days progressed, convincing evidence that this could be a fight to the finish.

India's corporate world is replete with little skirmishes for the control of one company or the other. But never has the battle been fought on this scale, nor have such giants descended into the *akhara* to fight, as they say, with bare hands. At stake are two of the country's largest industrial conglomerates: the Delhi Cloth and General Mills Co Ltd (DCM), with sales last year of Rs 420 crore, and Escorts Ltd with sales of Rs 240 crore. Both companies figure in the list of the country's 10 largest corporate giants—Escorts as a rapidly growing powerhouse of industrial energy, and DCM as an older, widely diversified super-corporation about to launch itself on a fresh growth path.

Facing each other in the ring are Swraj Paul, the expatriate London-based businessman best known for his well-publicised links with the prime minister and her establishment and the current owners of the two companies, the Shriram family in the case of DCM and the Nandas in Escorts.

Share Spurt: The action began quietly, three months ago, when unusual activity surfaced in the placid Delhi Stock Exchange (INDIA TODAY, March 15). A sudden spurt in the share prices of both DCM and Escorts raised eyebrows and caused some loose market gossip, much of it wide off the mark. But as the share prices rose steadily—in the case of DCM doubling in little more than a month—the anxious chairmen of the two companies reached for their telephones in February-March and made some discreet enquiries. What was happening?

No clear answers emerged, but the buying continued. DCM shares rose meteor-like from Rs 34.81 at the end of January to Rs 66.50 by mid-March, and then went on to touch Rs 78 in late April as the frenzied buying continued. Virtually keeping pace, Escorts share prices rocketed from Rs 39.75 to nearly Rs 70. DCM's share price had risen 130 per cent in less than three months, and that of Escorts by about 75 per cent. Something was certainly afoot.

Nobody knew what, till Swraj Paul emerged from the shadows. Declaring that he had taken advantage of policy changes over the last year that allowed non-resident Indians to buy shares in Indian companies, Paul said he had been buying shares in both DCM and Escorts, and immediately launched an attack on "feudal-style companies" that were controlled by families who treated their companies as their own even though they owned very few shares (*see interview*).

Formidable Opponent: That had every body reaching for the panic buttons, but Swraj Paul was no minor foe. Based in London for 17 years, Paul had started virtually from scratch in his middle 30s and built his Caparo group into an entity known in Britain for its marauding attacks on likely corporate prey. In the last two years alone, Paul had staked the equivalent of Rs 45 crore in take-over bids in Britain, some of them bitterly fought. With the kind of money he obviously had, he could buy up not only DCM and Escorts but two or three other large companies as well. Paul did, as a matter of fact, have his sights on at least one other company based in Bombay, but declined

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H.P. Nanda, chairman of Escorts and Bharat Ram, chairman of DCM in happier times: fighting back

ay which. "I haven't started buying its hares yet," he said. "And I don't want its hare prices to shoot up."

Although both DCM and Escorts are of orbidding size, Paul had picked his targets ell. The Shriram family had no more than 0 per cent of DCM stock in their hands, the Nandas about the same in Escorts. By hrowing less than Rs 15 crore or Rs 20 crore nto the ring, Paul could grab comparable tockholdings in both companies and then emand his pound of flesh.

The bulk of the shares in both compan- s is held by public sector financial in- itutions. Bodies like the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), the General Insurance Corporation (GIC) and the Unit Trust of ndia (UTI) own 54 per cent of Escorts stock nd 45 per cent of DCM's. And Paul could ell ask that these institutions either switch heir support to him, or that they at least stay eutral while he fought it out with the two ompanies' controlling families.

And this is where Paul was a parti- ularly menacing opponent to be faced with. or he has manifestly close connections with Mrs Gandhi—connections that could prove rucial if, as was certain, the battle would ventually be fought at the policy and politi- al levels.

Big Stake: Last fortnight, it seemed that aul had already got near his goal. nswering questions over the telephone om his base in London, he said he had put etween Rs 8 crore and Rs 10 crore into DCM nd Escorts share acquisitions, probably aving him up to 10 per cent of the equity in one of the companies, and less in the second. Chuckling with delight, Paul said he was "very close" to the shareholdings of those who now control the companies. Both the financial sums involved as well as his obvious enjoyment of the situation suggested that Paul had won the first round in what could prove to be a long-drawn-out battle.

But his domestic targets were not giving up easily. Galvanised into action, and sensing immediately that this affair was deadly serious, the company owners swung into high gear. Bharat Ram, the venerable chairman of DCM, and H.P. Nanda, his spunky counterpart in Escorts, immediately sought official assurance from those who controlled block votes, the financial institutions. Then, realising that this game was being played at a higher level, they sought out everyone of influence in Delhi: Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, P.C. Alexander, L.K. Jha, and M. Narasimham, secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs.

They got plenty of verbal support, and the assurance that the institutions had not been selling any shares. But in the crucial area of official action to prevent any take-over, they drew what was in effect a blank. Mukherjee first dismissed their fears of a take-over as "highly exaggerated", and then at subsequent meetings assured them that the Government did not intend to effect any change of management in the companies. At one stage, officials lower down even insisted that there was no evidence that non-resident Indians were doing the buying. Most important, Mukherjee refused to consider suggestions to limit non-resident investment in shares or to deny them voting rights, suggestions that the industrialists had made. "You can't expect me to make a U-turn on this," he told Bharat Ram and Nanda at one of several meetings.

Countermoves: Realising that other measures were necessary, the worried industrialists pulled out all the stops. Nanda summoned an emergency meeting of the Escorts board of directors, which armed itself with the power to refuse to register the transfer of share ownership. This is possible under Escorts's articles of association as well as under the Companies Act and the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act, for specified reasons. Nanda then went on to make a public offer to buy his company's shares at the going price from any shareholder who might be tempted to unload his holdings at the now very attractive price of close to Rs 70 for a Rs 10 share.

Then, to reduce speculation in his shares, he asked that his shares be traded only against instant cash payments—thus ruling out the "forward" transactions which permit delaying payment up to a maximum of 90

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days. Finally, rallying all the forces at his command, he told Escorts's 3,000 ancillary units and equally numerous dealers that they might have to give him support by buying Escorts shares. Said Nanda: "I don't have the capacity to compete with Paul in a price war. But I built this company. And when the wolf is at my throat I will fight with all the resources I have."

The Shriram family, vowing privately to fight the battle on every possible front, began to shore up their own defences and started buying their company's shares. They had, in fact, started this process even before January, apparently in an effort to strengthen their position after the raids on companies like Premier Automobiles last year. Said a member of the family: "We had planned to raise our holdings from 10 to 15 per cent and more. But we had not expected a sudden raid of this kind."

Family Infighting: What made the battle royal particularly intriguing was the hint of dissension in the Shriram family. Bharat Ram and his younger brother, Charat Ram, managing director of DCM, have not seen eye to eye on many issues for a long time, and in recent months the gulf between the two has, if anything, widened, (INDIA TODAY, March 15). Oddly enough, Charat Ram unloaded 1.65 lakh DCM shares that were under his control just when the stock-market attack began early this year. But getting to know of this, Bharat Ram quickly stepped in and first stopped the transfer of shares before buying them up himself.

Charat Ram has explained the sale as having been necessitated by the withdrawal of tax concessions to trusts that held company shares—and the sales were by a trust under its control. But he could have held back sales till November (when the tax exemption deadline expires). In any case, ever since the stock-market began to get jumpy, there had been speculation that the two brothers had fallen out even more than before, and the share transactions seemed to confirm that all was not well.

Observers also attach special importance to Swraj Paul's repeated attacks on the management of a company being passed down from father to son: Bharat Ram's three sons are in DCM, the eldest, Vinay Bharat Ram, being deputy managing director. In contrast, neither of Charat Ram's sons is in the company.

In his telephonic conversations with INDIA TODAY, as well as in a telex message he sent outlining his views, Swraj Paul said: "If I do anything it will be to ensure that the companies are more professionally managed.... The people who have toiled in the companies have the same rights as the 'so-called' owners with their small shareholdings." Was this a signal that Paul's next

SWRAJ PAUL

"Indian Industry Is Feudal"

TUBBY, genial, moon-faced and prematurely bald, 52-year-old Swraj Paul's spurs have been won in two contemporary battlefields: high finance and high politics. Paul, a johnny-come-lately is fast becoming a fat cat among a unique breed of Indian businessmen: those who have made their killings abroad. But unlike most of his peers, he has shunned a low profile and sought the spotlight. A British passport holder and a resident of England since 1966, Paul and his Caparo group (assets $100 million or Rs 160 crore) are well-known in Britain. The Financial Times *called Caparo "one of the more predatory companies on the stock-market".*

HARI OM GULATI

Paul: "I want professional management to be given the chance"

Indeed, Paul specialises in bitterly-fought take-over bids—which is the way the Caparo group launched its operations in 1977. A double take-over bid for Empire Plantations and Investments and Singlo Holdings (two interlinked tea plantation companies) was, according to The Times *of London "most remarkable for the abuse shelled out by the directors of Empire and Singlo". Caparo has been in several multi-crore take-overs, culminating last fortnight with a staggering £10 million (Rs 16 crore) bid for the Barton group, a tubing, engineering services and engineering group with sales of £50 million (Rs 80 crore).*

Perhaps the only company which Paul has built from scratch is Natural Gas Tubes, which was his first acquisition in 1970. Then the company employed no more than six people. A large new plant in Wales was then set up to manufacture one lakh tonnes of steel tubes annually, the factory being inaugurated by Pr Charles in 1977, and an extension by M Gandhi in 1979. Paul's interests now ra from diverse engineering products to f ceramics, tea, shipping, hotels and r estate. Before his latest rash of take-ov Paul controlled assets of £50 million, b this figure has now doubled—in a year.

In spite of being a British nation Paul has strong Indian roots. His broth control the Apeejay Surrendra gro which originated in Jullundur where h father was in the steel business. The gro now managed by youngest broth Surrendra as chairman, Jit as its financ brain and eldest brother Stya as t Delhi-based man responsible for corpora development, will have assets exceedi Rs 100 crore when two projects, to ma polyester staple fibre in Madhya Prade and caustic soda in Andhra Pradesh, a complete.

Paul is an unabashed admirer of M Gandhi. While brother Jit was arrest along with Mrs Gandhi during the Jana regime on the allegation that he had d nated jeeps to the ruling Congress party the 1977 elections, Paul himself has sto by her during her years out of office. "I a one of her great admirers," he confesses. believe she is the right person to r India." Paul's association with thir Indian, including the Festival of India London last year, won him a Padm Bhushan last month. Last fortnight, Pa talked with Managing Editor SUMA DUBEY *on the telephone to discuss h recent moves. Excerpts:*

Q. *There's been an outcry here Indian business circles over your buying shares of certain Indian companies. Wh is your reaction to this?*

A. I am really shocked at the r action. When the Government opens (the economy) up, I thought, let me do m duty. I bought some shares. First th Government requests Indians living a road to put money into India and whe they start, there's all this panic an propaganda. The whole fabric of India industry has become feudal. The questio is, are the companies going to remai feudal or will they function for the in terest of the shareholders? India is th only country in the world where, with per cent of shareholding, a father can p his son as managing director—whether he is qualified or not.

Q. *Are you aiming for control Escorts and* DCM*?*

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A. The last thing I want is control of companies nor do I have any desire to go and run companies in India. I am quite happy running companies here and I enjoy living here. But since this thing has started, I would very much like to see that the Government makes sure that the chairmen of the companies are independent people who can look after the interest of 100 per cent of the shareholders, not just a few. The Government has to ensure that if people like me come and put money in India, then their interest is looked after. What has shocked me is that my interest is unsafe in the hands of people who can create such a panic.

Q. ***Why have you chosen DCM and Escorts? At their present share values they yield a very poor rate of return.***

A. I started studying their balance sheets and realised how feudal they were. We think they are thoroughly capable of a better return (on capital) if the management can be woken up.

The other thing I want to stress is, why do they want to mix business with politics. The Indian Government has asked overseas Indians to invest money. We have bought these shares. They should fight the battle through shareholders, not go running to the politicians and make all sorts of political insinuations. I have not gone to any politician, I don't want to mix politics with it. Why do they want to?

Q. ***How much investment have you so far actually made in Indian shares?***

A. I'd say about Rs 8 to 10 crore.

Q. ***All company funds or your own?***

A. I don't have much money (laughing). These are all company funds from various companies in the Caparo group.

Q. ***How is this distributed between the companies you are buying into?***

A. We haven't done that yet. As soon as we go for registration, we will work that out.

Q. ***Suppose they refuse to transfer shares?***

A. How can they refuse? Again the Government has to make up its mind, are they going to allow companies to be run in a feudal style? Only feudal-style companies can refuse to grant shares.

Q. ***Don't you think that destabilising companies will have a negative effect?***

A. I don't know what they mean by "destabilisation" as nobody has said that the professional managers or the line management is going to be changed. No one has said that competent people need changing. All we want to do is to change their outlook and to point out that the companies belong to the shareholders. I have no desire to destabilise any company, and if I do anything it will be to ensure that the companies are more professionally managed than under their present feudal system.

Q. ***Do you want a seat on their boards?***

A. I haven't given it a thought. It is not a question of my wanting a seat on the board, but whoever manages the company must be responsible to 100 per cent of the shareholders, not just a few.

Q. ***Now that you are acquiring a substantial chunk of these companies, will you actively intervene in deciding who should run the companies?***

A. I would really like to see that the independent directors, whoever they are, work for the betterment of the companies. I am sure that in the companies themselves there are a lot of directors who will be happy to work independently if they know that their responsibility is to the shareholders and they cannot be thrown out by the owners. Just as in the press, if the editor knows he cannot be thrown out by the owner in two minutes time, he can exercise an independent judgement.

Q. ***You talked about feudalism, but aren't your own sons moving up equally fast in your own companies?***

A. No, I have two companies on the stock exchange, but I have never put my own sons on the boards. Only in the private companies. That is exactly the reason I did not put them there in spite of the fact that I own 75 per cent of the quoted companies.

Q. ***What do they do exactly?***

A. One is looking after tea and shipping in London with me and the other is in Calcutta; he is working with my brother, just training.

Q. ***Do you have any business connections with your brothers, Stya, Jit and Surrendra who are in India?***

A. I have no financial connection. We have a very strong family connection. I have three tea companies in India and I have asked my brother Surrendra to be chairman of these companies.

Q. ***But if you're buying these shares and you don't want a seat on the board....***

A. I didn't say that I don't want. I said I hadn't thought about it.

Q. ***Okay, if you decide that you don't want a seat, there is nothing to prevent you from actively canvassing for your brother Jit Paul, is there?***

A. Yes, that's a possibility.

Q. ***You wouldn't rule that out.***

A. No, I wouldn't rule that out.

Q. ***What will you do if the Government changes the rules suddenly?***

A. That will be a terrible thing for India because it will create instability internationally. But you can't argue with the Government. If they don't want me to invest. I'll come out. But how will that help? I won't sell the shares to everybody, I'll sell them to my brother.

Q. ***Have you made any private offers to sell the shares to anyone at a much higher price than the market value?***

A. No, no, I have no desire to sell the shares at any cost. Now that I have (bought)....I never realised their shareholding was so low till I started buying. They were working on other people's money and calling it their own company.

Q. ***How far are you at the moment from exceeding the shareholding of the owners of the companies?***

A. (Laughing) Very close.

Q. ***Have you overtaken them yet?***

A. (Laughing) Let us see.

Q. ***You're running neck and neck?***

A. Quite a bit.

Q. ***The finance minister has gone on record here to say that the Government will not allow a change of control. So have the financial institutions told us that....***

A. I fully agree with that. But, do they mean control in the hands of Mr Nanda or other directors also?

Q. ***The assumption was control in the hands of Nanda and Bharat Ram.***

A. Let them be chairmen but they must be responsible to the shareholders. I have no objection if Mr Nanda or Mr Bharat Ram remain chairmen, but who are they responsible to?

Q. ***There is a strong undercurrent of suggestion here that your friendship with Mrs Gandhi is enabling you to do what other people couldn't do.***

A. What have I done which is not in the policy? No, all I am saying is that control will still vest with proper management, and I have no desire to control the companies from London, but bad management does not make sense, neither mine nor theirs. I want professional management to be given the chance.

Q. ***How big is your Caparo group?***

A. With this latest acquisition (the Barton group) almost through, it doubles.

Q. ***How much are you personally worth?***

A. (Laughing) Very little. You may not believe this but I have very little.

Q. ***Can somebody come and take over the Caparo group as you are taking over other companies?***

A. I tell you what I will do. Let somebody come and run my company for two years and I will run theirs, and let them find any faults in my running (of companies) and I will find theirs, and let them see if they can improve mine or I can improve theirs.

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HAR PARSHAD NANDA

"No Real Danger"

HAR PARSHAD Nanda, 65, was in the thick of the biggest battle of his life last month, fighting to retain control of a company that he had built from scratch to become the 10th largest in the country. But, typically, he was off to Kathmandu for a brief holiday in late April. "I just wanted to get away from all the tension," he explained.

Nanda likes to enjoy life ("Most businessmen don't)", but is now all set for the bitter fight he has suddenly been embroiled in. He moved quickly to cover his flanks, and in an interview with INDIA TODAY *exuded confidence. Excerpts:*

Q. Do you think you will lose control of Escorts?

A. Over my dead body. I don't see a chinaman's chance of any such thing happening—if, that is, I am to believe the assurances of the finance minister and the financial institutions that they will vote with the management. But if the institutions are not with me, then I have already lost.

Q. Why is Swraj Paul buying your shares?

A. That is a question I would like to ask. At today's price of over Rs 60 for a Rs 10 share, he cannot possibly get a proper return on his investment. His return will be no more than 3 per cent. So if he is still buying, I want to know why. Even after the institutions and the finance minister have said they will back us, why is Mr Swraj Paul still buying our shares? He knows that the institutions own 54 per cent of Escorts shares.

Q. Do you think deeper political games are being played?

A. I don't know. I have never gone kowtowing to these people.

Q. Do you know Swraj Paul?

A. Yes, he is a good friend, we have been on many delegations together. He says he has great regard for me. In fact, he is a distant relative of mine.

Q. Have you got in touch with him?

A. No.

Q. Your next shareholders' annual meeting is only a few weeks away. Do you expect trouble then?

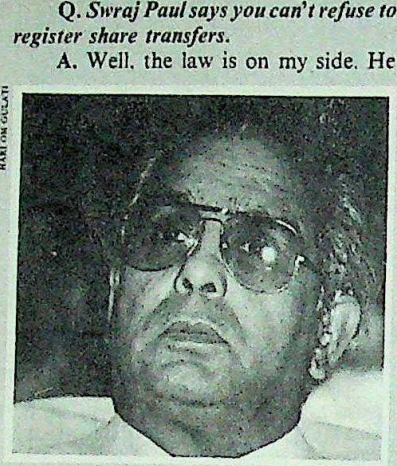
A. I am refusing to transfer the ownership of shares. The brokers will create a rumpus, but this is only of nuisance value. There is no real danger this year. The danger can come later.

Q. What danger do you expect later?

A. Well, there is a danger. That is why we have suggested to the finance minister that either he restrict the total non-resident shareholding in a company, or the shares sold to non-residents should be without voting rights.

Q. Swraj Paul says you can't refuse to register share transfers.

A. Well, the law is on my side. He



HARI OM GULATI

Nanda: "Law is on my side"

hasn't read my articles of association, which clearly state that we can keep out undesirable investors.

Q. Why is industry criticising the incentives to non-residents after welcoming them earlier?

A. No one saw the possibility of abuse. These schemes are highly discriminatory, and give preference to people abroad over genuine and true residents in India. All the people we have spoken to are surprised by the turn of events in this area. We are now offering non-residents higher rates of interest than those at which we ourselves are borrowing from abroad. At the rates of interest that we are offering the non-residents, they will take out far more money they brought in, and without paying any tax.

Q. Two months ago, you said you did not have the money to buy more Escorts shares. But now you have offered to buy anything that people want to sell. How have you managed to raise money now?

A. When it is a question of blood, you find the resources. One of my trusts had sold Escorts shares last year, and had a lot of liquid cash. We are using this to buy now. I am also telling my dealers and ancillaries that they may have to help out by buying Escorts shares. These are people who have grown with Escorts, and have a loyalty to the company.

Q. Do you think Swraj Paul has won at least the first round?

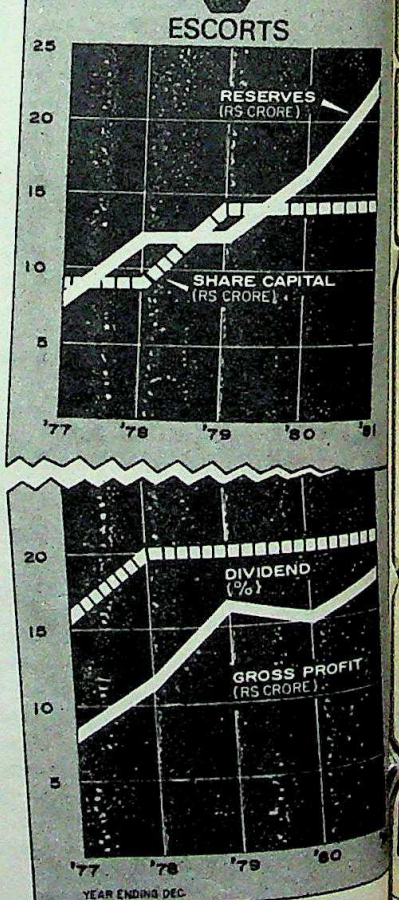
A. Not a chance.

move would be to insist that Bharat R sons should not step into their fa shoes?

Political Aspect: Yet a second unk element in the drama concerned its po overtones and the suggestions of a battle between Rajiv Gandhi and Dhawan, the prime minister's seeming powerful special assistant. Rajiv Gandh in school with both Vivek Bharat (Bharat Ram's youngest son) and Rajan Nanda, H.P. Nanda's elder son now Escorts president.

Moreover, DCM had been embroiled dispute with one of Dhawan's relatives, Sareen, whose land outside Delhi had acquired by the Uttar Pradesh Governm and given to DCM as the site for its tr project, as part of a new industrial estate. turned out, the land happened to Sareen's. The dispute is now before Allahabad High Court.

Sareen denied that he had anything do with the battle over DCM and Esc shares, but in informed political circles was quickly building up as a test case would reveal who carried more clout: R



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BHARAT RAM

"He's Being Too Clever"

VETERAN industrialist Bharat Ram has reason to be worried. His company, the Delhi Cloth and General Mills (DCM) is under stock-market attack, and he faces the prospect of locking horns with Swraj Paul in a bitter fight to prevent the latter from getting a foothold into DCM.

Bharat Ram: "My sons are professionals"

INDIA TODAY *interviewed him last fortnight on the stock-market battle and the issues it has stirred up. Excerpts:*

Q. ***Why do you think Swraj Paul is buying shares in your company?***

A. To buy shares as an investment is one thing. But when you start maligning the company's management straightaway, the intention can't be just to get a return on your investment. That is why one gets anxious, and starts looking for possible intentions.

Q. ***How many shares have been bought by Paul?***

A. It is difficult to say until the shares come in for transfer of ownership. The reports are that about 6 per cent of the shares have changed hands.

Q. ***What can a buyer do with 6 per cent voting power?***

A. Well, I suppose they can cause irritation to the management if they want to. But with 6 per cent, you can't influence a company's decisions.

Q. ***What if he insists on having his representative on the board of directors?***

A. Directors are elected by a majority of the shareholders. What can you do with 6 per cent?

Q. ***Suppose the financial institutions, who hold such a large chunk of DCM shares, suggest that it is fair for the holder of 6 per cent to be represented?***

A. Well, then we will have to see.

Q. ***In retrospect, do you think it was a mistake to have reduced your shareholding in the company to such low levels?***

A. Yes, I think we were careless. Other groups were more cautious about retaining their shareholding strength.

Q. ***How do you propose to tackle the situation you face?***

A. I can refuse to transfer shares.

Q. ***What do you think are the repercussions of this kind of a raid?***

A. All industrialists will come together and help each other through cross-investment. But the problem is that instead of investing in growth we will be putting all our money in each other's shares.

Q. ***Swraj Paul has charged companies like yours with being feudalistic, with sons succeeding fathers even though the family holding is very small. Would you care to comment?***

A. What is feudal? My sons are highly qualified, they are professionals. I do not believe in the American kind of professionalism where men change from company to company. They have no stake in the company, there is no continuity. It is important to have a stake in the company, you then work better.

Q. ***Paul has also raised the question of families running companies despite having minority shareholding.***

A. What is control? And what is minority? Our stake is smaller than only the financial institutions. And we are appointed managing directors for five years. The company was started by the family, so this is a continuing thing.

Q. ***In the light of what has happened, what do you think of the schemes to attract investments from non-resident Indians?***

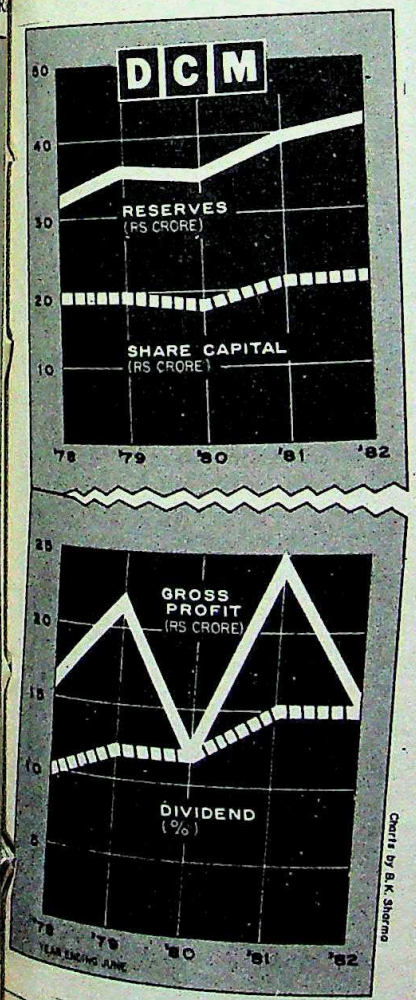
A. Well, this has brought into focus the implications of what the Government is doing. I approve of non-residents being given these incentives, but provided this serves the purpose we have in mind. The idea was to encourage them to start new industries, to bring back professionals. Instead, panic is being created and domestic industrialists' good relations with non-resident Indians are being soured.

Q. ***Do you think there needs to be a change in the laws governing company take-overs?***

A. Yes, these laws must be changed.

Q. ***What do you think is likely to happen in the case of*** DCM***?***

A. I don't think Mr Paul will be able to get away with the game he is playing. I think he'll find he's being too clever.



andhi or Dhawan. If Swraj Paul managed to ash through his aggressive share-ownership , and Rajiv Gandhi was unwilling or ible to exercise his influence to stop him, it ould clearly be interpreted as a victory for hawan, who is known to be feuding with ajiv's aides, most notably Arun Nehru.

The battle was therefore being fought several fronts: on the stock exchange with oney power, in New Delhi's eternally un-rtain world of influence-peddling where e threatened industrialists were trying to rum up support, within estranged families here mutual suspicions ate into the vitals, nd on the political front.

ANY STOCK-MARKET attack *à la* Swraj Paul would have been impossible till a year ago, when the Government announced a series of incentives o encourage non-residents to send their ollars home. Initially, non-residents were nly invited to put their money in special ank accounts, or offered priority allotment f cement, scooters, and other items in short upply in return for remittances. Last year, owever, the Government announced a se-

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ries of new measures. These opened up the domestic stock-market to overseas Indians by allowing higher investment limits, expanding the list of industries open to them, providing tax concessions, and—crucially as has turned out—allowed even companies owned by non-residents to buy shares in India.

A few months later, the Goverment liberalised its schemes still further, removing the Rs 1 lakh limit on non-resident share investment in any one company, and retaining a limit of 1 per cent investment in one company's shares only if repatriation of the investment was sought. Finally, in his last budget on February 28 the finance minister announced sweeping tax concessions that virtually made the country a tax haven for non-residents of all hues. The income tax was slashed to a flat 22.5 per cent, and complete exemption provided from wealth and gift taxes.

No one quite realised the full implications of these measures. Domestic industry actually issued notices of welcome and suggested that exemption from estate duty should be extended as well. Only now, after Paul's predatoriness, do all the pieces in the jigsaw puzzle fit in, revealing some odd coincidences. For Paul has been buying DCM and Escorts shares in the names of the companies he runs in Britain. The Government's scheme allows share investments by overseas companies that are 60 per cent owned by non-residents; and a British newspaper reported that Paul owns 60 per cent of some of his companies.

Further, the finance minister announced his tax concessions at the end of February. Paul, however, started buying a full month earlier. Domestic industrialists are now asking a question to which there is no answer: did Paul know of the budget measures in advance?

Alarmed Industrialists: Conscious of a new danger, all of Indian industry and business was now up in arms. If it was DCM and Escorts today, it could well be the Tatas or Mahindras tomorrow, since these groups also control no more than 5 per cent or so of their companies' total share capital. And if it wasn't Paul, it could be some other monied non-residents—and there are any number who can raise the millions needed to mount successful raids.

Overseas Indian tycoons like Ravi Tikkoo the shipping magnate, Hari Harilela the Hong Kong-based multimillionaire or the Hindujas, international traders, could easily muster the relatively small amounts of capital that would be required to take over any Indian corporate giant. For an Indian who went out and made his millions in the global marketplace, it could be difficult to resist the temptation to take over century-old giants like DCM and stake a claim to both power and prestige in his home country. In that sense, Swraj Paul may merely have shown the way to others much bigger and wealthier than he, unless the Government stepped in with preventive measures.

"This is insane," said L.M. Thapar, head of the Thapar group of industries. "It's just not on the table. Non-residents are taxed at rates that have no bearing on the tax rates in India. They have access to much larger funds, they operate in an environment where they can make much more money. We in India are simply not on an equal footing with them. Yet the non-residents are being treated on a preferential basis. This is manifestly unfair."

Added Hari Shankar Singhania, head

NADAN ARORA

Paul (left) and Mrs Gandhi: close connections

of the Singhania corporate empire: "It is absolutely wrong for people who are being given special wealth tax, gift tax and income tax advantages by the Government to use these advantages for destabilising well-run companies."

Prakash Tandon, former chairman of Hindustan Lever and now head of the National Council of Applied Economic Research, was equally forthright: "How does it serve the interests of the economy if an Indian shareholder is replaced by a foreign shareholder? We will earn foreign exchange, certainly, but at what cost? Don't give concessions if it comes to existing shares." Tandon is for foreign capital provided it comes to new industry, new investment.

H.P. Nanda, meanwhile, was painting a more cataclysmic picture: "Anything can happen under this system. Black money can go out of the country and come back in the form of non-resident investment, with cial tax advantages. Or a non-resident company can first buy the shares and transfer them to any foreign managing ncy. Who is to know? There are no ch

A memorandum circulated by bot and Escorts put it down in black and "Black money—whether emanating under-invoicing, over-invoicing or wise—could flow back into India und guise of non-resident ments....Control of Indian companies be secured by various kinds of illegal ators and even sometimes foreign go ments through agencies such as CIA."

Intensive Campaign: While the la ference could be considered genuflecti populist sentiment, legal pundits argued by terming even people with foreign ssports as "non-resident Indians" Swraj Paul holds a British passport), Government had flouted various laws, tably the Foreign Exchange Regulations (FERA), which does not distinguish bet foreign foreigners and Indian foreig Delegations of industrialists, including heavyweights as J.R.D. Tata, K.N. M and FICCI President Ashok Jain, put view across to the finance minister—nificantly enough, after they were den meeting with Mrs Gandhi. The chambe commerce issued denunciations, and merous company operatives lobbied government officials. Rarely had country's entire business establishment lied around in this spectacular fashion.

The campaign was pursued thro every available forum. The press was brie members of Parliament raised the issue demanded clarifications, and even over Indians were roped into the act. In Lond a newly formed International Forum Overseas Indians (an obvious rival to S Paul's Indo-British Association) organis meeting where influential non-residents c cised destabilising take-overs. Said R Sethia of the Sethia group: "I believe (non-resident) investment should take form of establishing new companies, take away thriving Indian-owned comp ies." Others stressed that investment sho be in companies that needed financial technological transfusion.

Hari Harilela, the multimillionaire, d nied when contacted at his office in Ho Kong that he had any hand in the sto market raids—giving the lie to rumours he too was involved. Similarly, Ash Hinduja, one of the four monied Hind brothers, said neither he nor his brothers w interested in making such corporate inv ments. Clearly, Swraj Paul was acting sing handed—and there did not exist, as ma gossip suggested, any international cons tium of non-residents who were acting

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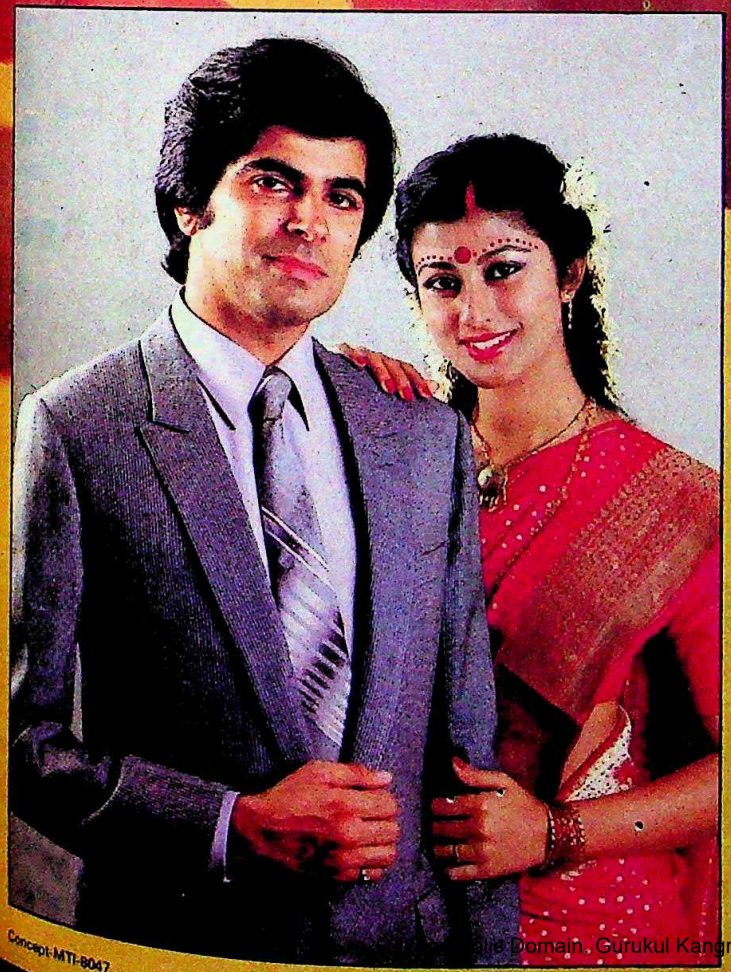

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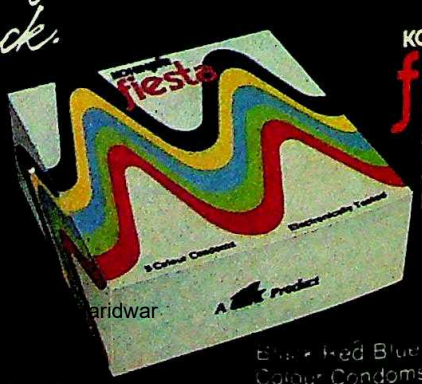
It was Friday. A deadly shade of Friday.
I could feel the devil rattling in my bones. Black it was.
Daredevil black as the night black.
I scared the hell out of her.
But she understood.



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concert in the stock-markets.

Meanwhile, pressure to stop such raids built up from several quarters. Reserve Bank Governor Manmohan Singh threw in his own considerable weight, arguing that Indian industry is entitled to an assurance from the Government that we shall not allow any enterprise in India to become a bubble in the whirlpool of international speculation."

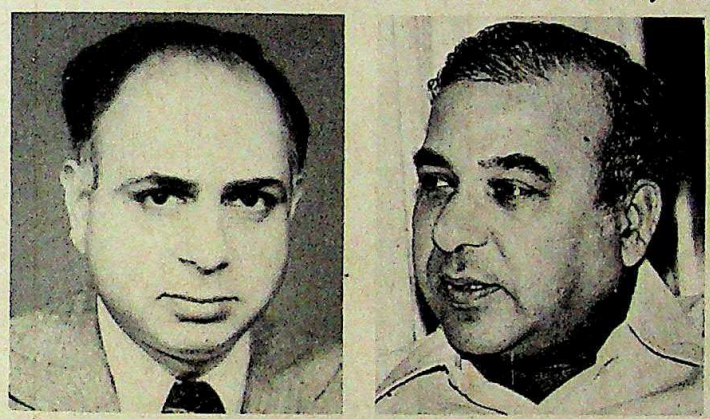
Swift Reaction: Responding swiftly to events and sensing that public opinion was being built up against his share acquisitions, Swraj Paul hit back sharply. In a statement released to the press, he charged Indian businessmen with building up a "smear campaign" against non-resident investment, and launched a frontal attack on people who continue to think of themselves as 'owners' of companies) even when they have thinned out their holdings to minor proportions". Effectively opening up a second front in the war, he said: "Chairmen and directors are employees of the company and receive nothing but the remuneration which is shown in the company balance sheets. Only a person receiving something other than what is written in the balance sheets would be shaken enough to begin a campaign about it.

Contacted by INDIA TODAY, he sent three successive telex messages stating his position and making further charges against Indian business families. The central argument he developed was that the families were running companies for their own benefit, not that of the full body of shareholders. Thus, the managements of DCM and Escorts were acquiring shares to protect their own position instead of telling other shareholders whether it was in their interest to sell or to hold on for a better price. "It is a dereliction of duty to the shareholders when they are advised to sell to the management. This is what I mean by not acting in the best interest of the shareholders, but only in their own."

Debunking the talk of companies being destabilised, he once again drew a firm distinction between the families in control and the "professional management". He asserted: "If I do anything, it will be to ensure that the companies are more professionally managed than under the present feudal system. The people who have toiled in the companies have the same rights as the so-called' owners with their small shareholdings.... The bogey talk of destabilisation and similar emotive phrases will not help." While every move and utterance of his suggested that he was gunning for something more than mere investment in company stocks, Swraj Paul denied that he wanted "control" of the companies. His central aim, he said, was to make the managements accountable to the shareholders.

Corporate Responsibility: By distinguishing between the families and their companies, by separating 'owners' from managements, and by delinking the interests of the shareholders at large from those of the controlling families, Paul was clearly appealing to broader principles of corporate responsibility, questioning the right of people with small shareholdings to perpetuate family control, and indirectly building a case to place his own nominee on the board of directors—to represent his own shareholding interest.

In his interview, he said: "I would very much like to see that the Government makes sure that the chairmen of the companies are independent people who can look after the interest of 100 per cent of the shareholders, not just a few....My interest is unsafe in the hands of people who can create such a panic and get articles written and letters planted in newspapers."



IDBI's Dave (left) and ICICI's Nadkarni: watching from the sidelines

Nanda responded angrily to these charges by pointing out that he had been unanimously elected managing director by the full body of shareholders, as had been his sons Rajan and Anil as joint managing directors. "Their appointments were subsequently cleared by the Department of Company Affairs. I am shocked, surprised and disappointed that Mr Swraj Paul should have slighted the financial institutions and other shareholders as well as the Government by making this charge of hereditary management."

Crucial Point: But Paul had raised a fundamental question of propriety: should people with small shareholdings treat large companies as their family enterprises? On this score at least, the country's biggest shareholders, the public sector financial institutions, were unconvinced. If anything, they saw the trend towards minority control as a healthy development. Said S.S. Nadkarni, managing director of the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI): "If you have only a minority holding, you are forced to perform in order to retain control of the company. You are there by the shareholders' consent, not by right of ownership."

Others expressed similar views. Said H.C. Kothari, vice-chairman of Kothari Industries: "Whether a company is vulnerable or not depends on how well it is managed. Otherwise no one can keep control with small shareholdings." Added S.A. Dave, executive director of the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI): "The criterion for control should be not ownership but sound management. And we consider Escorts and DCM as well managed companies."

Disquieting Trends: Despite these eminently reasonable statements, there have been cases where family managements have played around with companies to suit their private interests—while the institutions watched helpless. An institution spokeman recalled that when the Mafatlals decided to carve up their companies into different spares of influence for the different branches of the family, the arrangements suited them but were detrimental to the general body of shareholders. "We tried to protest, but couldn't," said the spokesman.

A second case involved the Goenkas, who once again made their own arrangements regarding asset transfers in order to suit their plans to divide the companies among the three Goenka brothers. After first trying to protest, and then giving in, LIC was faced with no choice but to disinvest its shares in the Goenkas' holding company, Duncan Brothers.

In yet a third case, this time involving the Sarabhais, transactions involving asset transfers that would suit the Sarabhai family but adversely affect other shareholders have been blocked temporarily by the institutions. Said the institution spokesman: "When it comes to such matters, the families treat the companies as their own, ignoring other shareholders. And very often, there is very little that the institutions can do."

Meanwhile, if performance was the yardstick on which control hinged, Swraj Paul was questioning this as well in the case of DCM and Escorts. "According to the last balance sheet," he said in one of his telex messages, "DCM makes a return of 10 per cent on the capital employed, and Escorts a 17 per cent return. This is less than the

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interest one has to pay in India when borrowing from the bank. Could these be considered good results from any point of view?"

Sharp Responses: Apart from the fact that this was a yardstick by which virtually every company in the country would fail the test, domestic businessmen were making counter-statements about Paul. Said Vinay Bharat Ram: "Rather than teaching Indian businessmen how to manage, Mr Swraj Paul should prove his managerial credentials by setting up new industry in India in areas of high technology."

D.H. Pai Panandikar, secretary-general of FICCI, pointed out that minority control had been forced on the companies by the Government: "The Government stipulates that the promoters' share should not be more than 40 per cent. The norm for a new project is in fact 20 per cent promoters' contribution. Then, the Government has centralised the bulk of investible funds with its own financial institutions. Any company that wants to expand has to go to them for money, and they say that they will convert 20 per cent of the loan into share equity. This dilutes the promoters' share further. Finally, the high taxes on income, wealth and capital gains makes it all but impossible for anyone to keep very large shareholdings. After all this, you can't turn round and use minority holdings as a point of criticism."

Industrialist Ashok Birla, while disagreeing with the industrialists' appeals to the Government for help in fighting their battles, nevertheless had a parallel point to make: "The choice is between growth and majority control. If you want the former, you have to give up the latter because there is no way any family can continue to contribute the bulk of capital for very large companies. Minority control is the only concept that will work in the '80s and '90s. You don't have a choice."

THE REAL issue, however, was neither minority control nor industrial feudalism, to use Paul's phrase. These were concepts being used to aim at swinging the real power-balance, the financial institutions. Whether it is in DCM or Escorts, or in any other company, the institutions are now far and away the country's big shareholders, controlling share investments of over Rs 750 crore—close to one-fifth the national total in all joint-stock companies. This enormous power had by and large been used to bolster good management companies. Nevertheless, they represent a previously unknown centralisation of [illegible] corporate voting power which could be used by the Government through the Finance Ministry.

The domestic industrialists' campaign from the start, had been aimed at making sure that the institutions did not switch their support. And Paul was clearly aiming his fire at issues that would make such support [illegible] questionable. Even if the institutions could be persuaded to stay neutral, that would be half his battle won.

Assurances: Publicly at least, the institutions as well as Finance Ministry officials assured both Bharat Ram as well as Nanda that they had nothing to fear. Said Nitish Sengupta, controller of capital issues in the Finance Ministry: "No institution has sold a single share in either company. The

DCM & ESCORTS

Juicy Pickings

AS SHARE market pickings go, both DCM and Escorts are juicy fruit. Both companies figure among the country's corporate giants, DCM ranking fourth and Escorts 10th in the sales ladder. Escorts in fact qualifies as among the more rapidly growing companies in the country, despite the fact that 1982 was a poor year because of sluggish tractor sales. The company's sales have risen sixfold in less than a decade, from Rs 42.58 crore in 1972 to Rs 240.5 crore in 1981, while profits have more than kept pace, rising from Rs 1.72 crore to Rs 17.43 crore—a 10-fold increase.

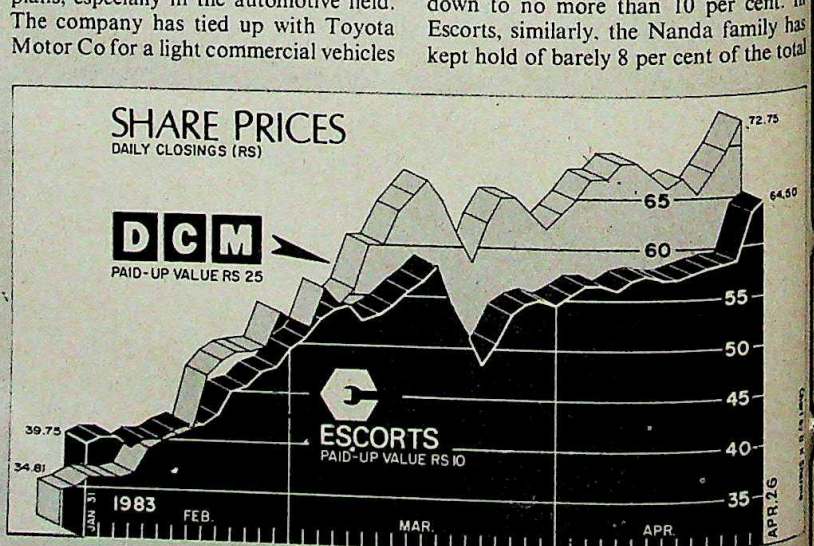
The company's shareholders have got their rewards in terms of the periodic issue of bonus shares, while the dividend in recent years has averaged 20 per cent. Claims company Chairman H.P. Nanda: "The financial institutions consider ours one of the best run companies."

Even before the recent price spurt because of Swraj Paul's buying, Escorts shares were valued on the market at four times their face value of Rs 10. And this, says Nanda, "was not a true reflection of the worth of the company. The shares were under-priced".

The DCM record is more modest, the company going through cyclical ups and downs. Last year was once again a poor period; though sales rose by 10 per cent to Rs 420 crore, profits were down sharply from Rs 24.05 crore to Rs 15.07 crore. The company's dividend payments were raised to 15 per cent two years ago, but there haven't been any bonus issues for a long time. Reserves have risen slowly, by no more than 30 per cent in the last four years. These trends were reflected on the stock exchange, where the company's Rs 25 shares were valued at no more than around Rs 35 before Swraj Paul upped the ante.

Growth Potential: Nevertheless the company is sound, with established lines of business and ambitious diversification plans, especially in the automotive field. The company has tied up with Toyota Motor Co for a light commercial vehicles project and had been planning to expand its electronics operations as well, while also renovating its textile mills. Says Vinay Bharat Ram, deputy managing director: "DCM would be an attractive proposition not on the strength of its current performance but on the basis of its great potential."

But the most important reason for these two companies attracting Swraj Paul's acquisitive eye would be quite simply the very low stake of the promoters. A decade ago, the Shriram family had close to a quarter of total DCM share capital, but this was gradually whittled down to no more than 10 per cent. In Escorts, similarly, the Nanda family has kept hold of barely 8 per cent of the total



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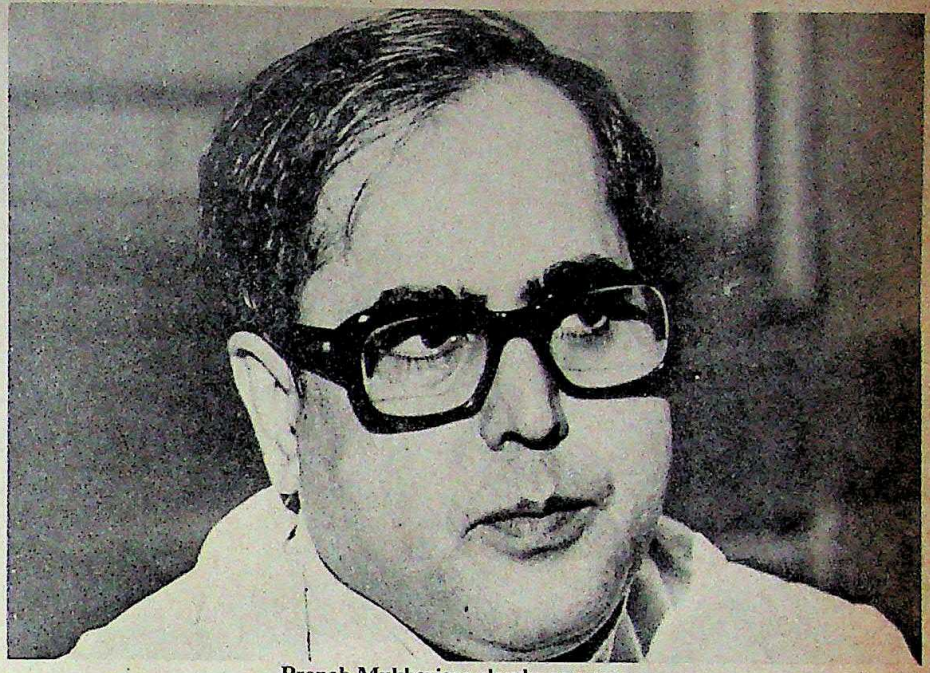
re holding on to their shares." Pranab ukherjee in turn told the worried in- strialists that the institutions would con- tinue to back the managements of well run companies.

In Bombay, questions addressed di- ectly to the institutions elicited the same esponse. Said Dave of the IDBI: "The prin- ple we follow is that if it is a good anagement, we back it. We will not disturb good performing management." Added K. Seth, managing director of the GIC: "Our olicy is not to destabilise managements. In he case of these two companies, there is no eason to change this policy of support."

S.P. Kapoor, secretary of the LIC, said: The promoter has first claim to the in- titutions' support. We change a manage- ent only if we are dissatisfied with its erformance."

Worrying Buys: For all the declarations f support, however, the issue was far from ttled. As Nanda asked: "At today's price over Rs 60 for a Rs 10 share, he cannot ossibly get a proper return on his invest- ent. His return will be no more than 3 per



Pranab Mukherjee: cloudy assurances

stock of Rs 14 crore.

Neither Bharat Ram nor H.P. Nanda, the respective chairmen of DCM and Escorts, seem to have given thought earlier to the inherent weakness of their positions. Both now acknowledge ruefully that other groups were more cautious: the Birlas traditionally hold around 25 per cent of their companies' shares, though the percentage could go as high as 40 or drop as low as 10. The Birla family's interests are further protected by an intricate network of cross-shareholdings, and a forbidding array of trusts and investment companies that put up an impenetrable smokescreen. Says Ashok Birla, a member of the family: "We constantly monitor the shareholding pattern and ensure maximum dispersal in order to prevent trouble."

Cautious Strategy: Other major industrial houses have adopted similar strategies: L.M. Thapar says his group normally holds between 30 per cent and 40 per cent of company shares, effectively making him immune from any stock-market raid. The Singhanias have been equally cautious. Hari Shanker Singhania says: "We normally hold between 35 per cent and 40 per cent of the shares in our major companies, and the financial institutions hold another 25 per cent or so. We have made sure that we are safe."

Even non-family concerns have usually taken care to protect their position. Hindustan Lever refused to buckle under tremendous pressure from the Government to reduce its foreign shareholding to 40 per cent, managing to keep the holding of its parent company, Unilever, at 51 per cent. Says a company spokesman: "We were wise to have done this, as recent events show." Despite a safe majority holding, Lever continues to monitor all major shareholdings, keeping track of everyone who owns more than 3,000 shares in the company. "There are no more than 50 such people," said the company spokesman. "And we have over 80,000 shareholders."

Dispersal of holdings has been a standard strategy to protect the promoter's position. In recent public issues of shares, most companies have spread holdings as thinly as possible, so that many companies now count their shareholders in lakhs, as against only 20,000 in DCM. But the most original strategy devised so far has been by Dhirubhai Ambani, chairman of the high-flying Reliance Textile Industries. By forcing the price of his Rs 10 shares to move up to over Rs 150, Ambani has effectively made acquisition of Reliance an expensive proposition for anyone so inclined. A year ago, there had in fact been a concerted attack on Reliance, forcing its prices down, but Ambani fought back, buying furiously and taking the company's share prices to record levels. In the process, he taught stock market operators a tough lesson: don't meddle with Reliance.

Both DCM and Escorts committed a second cardinal error: putting all their eggs in one basket. Both groups are virtually single-company ventures, while other groups like the Modis have spawned numerous corporate entities, making a take-over of the whole group manifestly impossible.

Nevertheless, there are other groups who are as vulnerable to attack as DCM and Escorts. The Tatas typically hold only 4 or 5 per cent of the shares of their major companies, with about as much again being held through family-controlled trusts. The Mahindras are in a similar position, holding barely 5 per cent in the group's flagship company Mahindra and Mahindra.

Both groups feel their protection against a raid lies in the professional managements they provide, and the respect they have earned among shareholders. Says Harish Mahindra: "If anyone attempted a raid on our companies, our defence would be the simple fact that we have managed the company well. It would be a sad day if we had to protect our position by buying up our own company's shares."

For all that, the events of recent months—the Goenka raid, for instance, on Premier Automobiles late last year—have convinced many industrial families of the necessity to increase their stake. Bharat Ram and Nanda have both decided to double their stockholdings. The question is: has this action come too late in the day?

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cent. So if he is still buying, I want to know why. If the institutions and the finance minister say they will back us, why is Mr Swraj Paul still buying our shares?" The nagging worry was, had Paul had conjured up some way of getting around the road-block? As though to make doubly sure that nothing could go wrong, Nanda last fortnight was demanding that the chairmen of all the financial institutions issue public declarations to the effect that they would support the present managements of his company and DCM. And both he and Bharat Ram were concentrating their efforts on getting the finance minister to make a firm commitment on specific measures to stop the non-resident threat, perhaps during his reply to the budget debate towards the end of the month. But Pranab Mukherjee, till the last meeting with the industrialists, gave no indication that he was about to take firm action. The assurances remained strictly verbal.

Controversial Deals: If the industrialists were not fully reassured, they had good reason, for the financial institutions have in recent years acted in a manner that has evoked sharp controversy. In one case, in July-August last year, the institutions sold their shares in the Bombay Burmah Trading Company to the Wadia group that controls Bombay Dyeing. In another controversial deal, the institutions transferred their block holdings in India Cements to ITC; and when R.P. Goenka mounted a raid on Premier Automobiles last year, the institutions wavered in their support to the existing management—finally taking part in a restructuring of the Premier Automobiles board that gave Goenka a foothold in the company.

N.N. Pai, IDBI chairman when the controversies flourished, stoutly defends the institutions' decisions, arguing vehemently that in the India Cements case shares had been transferred to ITC at a very good price after offers to sell to the Tamil Nadu Government met with no response, and after the rival contenders to ITC failed to offer even a sixth of the price that ITC paid. "This was done with the full knowledge and concurrence of the Government and what we did was in the interest of India Cements shareholders since they would benefit from ITC's professional management. I don't know how we can be faulted for our actions."

Nevertheless, there is evidence to show that pressure from New Delhi could possibly make a difference to the way the institutions vote in a situation of conflict. An institution spokesman recalled that R. Venkataraman, defence minister, had wanted the institutions to hand India Cements back to the original promoters, who had been thrown out by the institutions earlier. "We were able to get our way only six hours before the final deadline, when New Delhi relented," the spokesman said.

Quick Purchase: In the immediate case of DCM and Escorts, one of the institutions was already beginning to bestir itself. The UTI, anxious to book profits on Escorts shares at the current record prices, indicated that it wanted to sell a part of its holdings. Reacting swiftly, Nanda said that he would buy anything that UTI wanted to unload. "I knew this would happen," said Nanda. "It is quite natural for them to want to take advantage of a price situation. I have told them that if they unload their holdings in stages at reasonable intervals I will be able to take their shares."

As the days wore on, both Bharat Ram and Nanda realised that this could prove to be an extended battle. The shares already having changed hands in large numbers, the next battle would obviously be over registering the transfer in the companies' books. With both Bharat Ram and Nanda declaring that they would refuse to do so, an appeal to the Company Law Board or the courts seemed inevitable. And, as both Bharat Ram and Nanda pointed out, the courts are notoriously slow and would naturally take their time to decide.

Would Swraj Paul be willing to go through this rigmarole that could stretch out for years? Or would he make a partial compromise, offering the company managements a buy-back deal that would leave companies safe but earn Paul a fat profit his shares? Paul himself declared that ing bought, he would not now sell. And known in Britain for taking up to two and more to deliver the *coup de grace* the first raid.

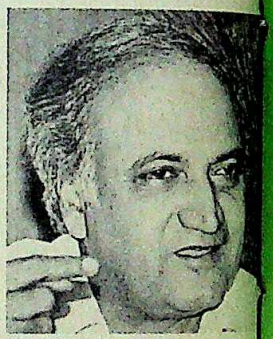
Future Plans: Thus, while the outc of the battle remained anyone's guess, domestic industrialists were rethinking tegies, and shifting attention from expan to consolidation. There was a general w ing that businessmen would first slow d their investment plans and plough mo into shoring up their stockholding positi There would also, said Harish Mahindra a reluctance to borrow money from financial institutions for fear that they m decide to convert the loans into share ca later.

The institutions, however, dismi this possibility ("We have plenty of peop the queue for loans," said one institut director), and contended that this c hardly become a problem when the stitutions controlled most of the avail funds. "Who can they go to?" asked institution spokesman.

Prakash Tandon saw the acquisi of shares by contending families as a c pletely negative development. "If we wis introduce professionalisation into India answer is not to buy up shares and put t in the control of non-resident groups families. This will only mean the perpetua of the existing position, and the postp ment of professionalisation."

Many industrialists, meanwhile, asking themselves one central question survival or prosperity depend now on b close to the centres of political power? Anand Mahindra, one of the heirs to Mahindra empire and recently retur from Harvard Business School: "May should have spent the last two years acq ing friends in Delhi, instead of getting m an MBA. Perhaps that would have been useful for our companies."

—T.N. N



(From left) J.R.D. Tata, K.N. Modi, Ashok Jain and Keshub Mahindra: intense lobbying

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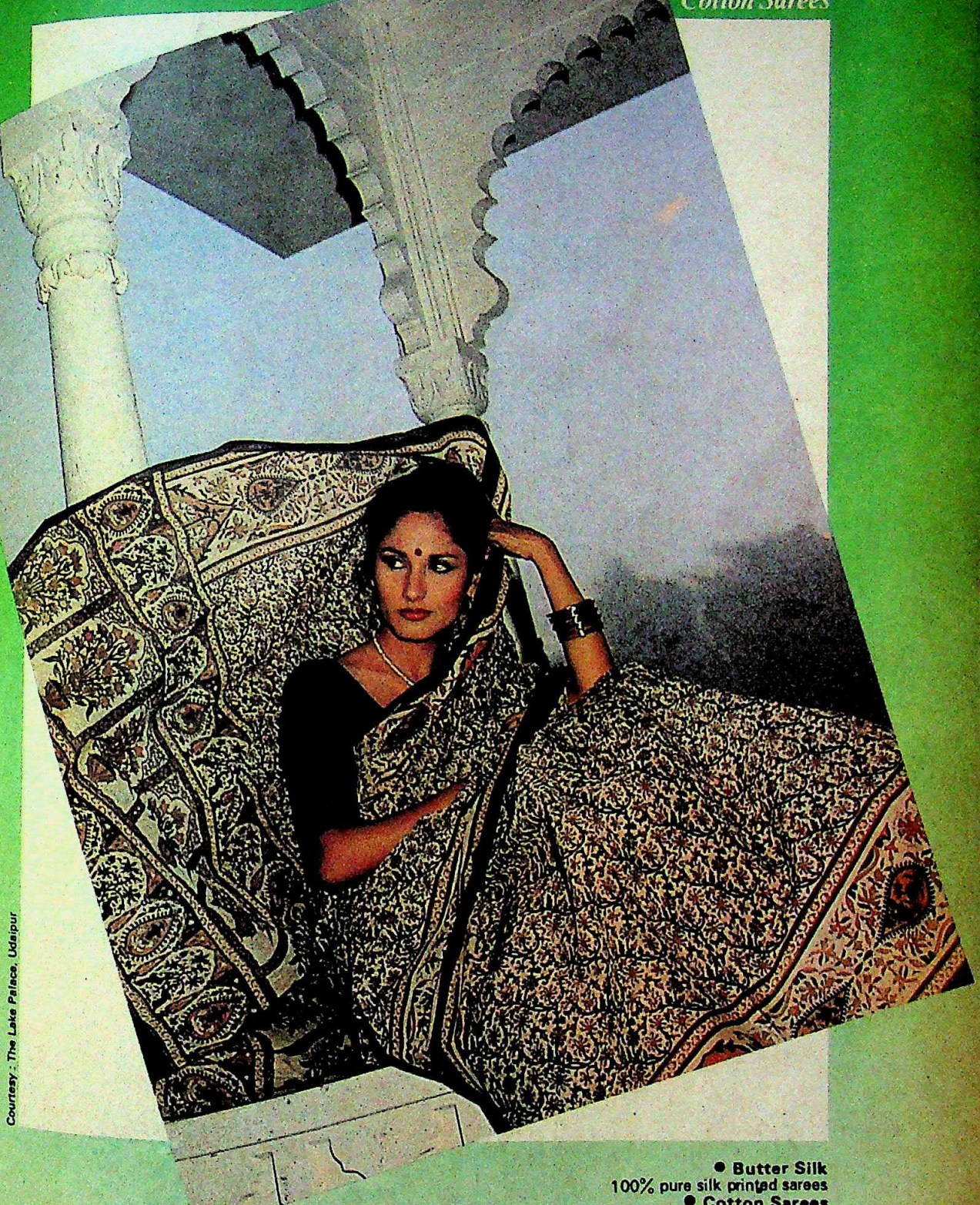

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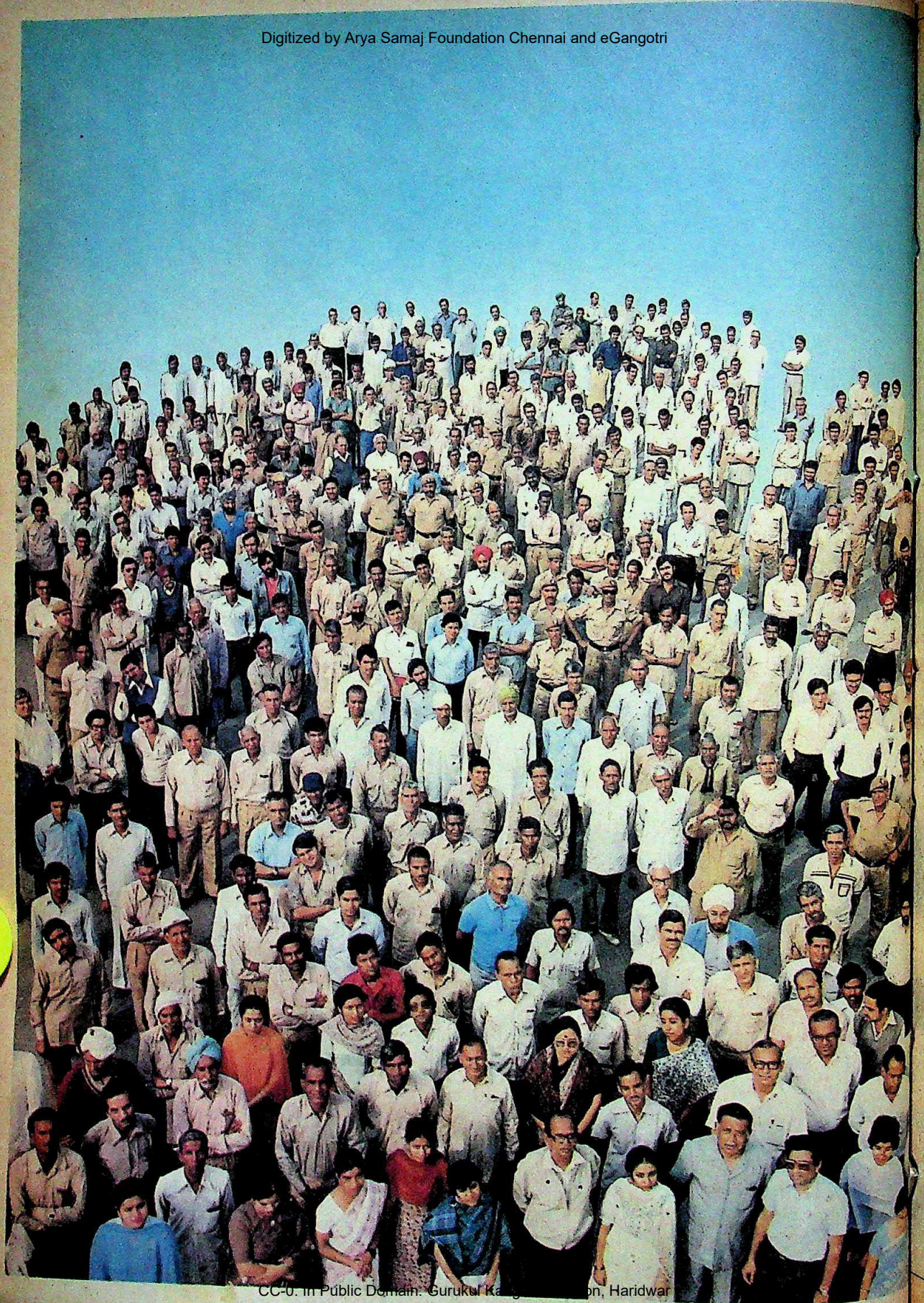

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UTTAR PRADESH

Identity Crisis

WHEN Dr Vinay Saxena was sentenced to life imprisonment for murdering his wife Sudha in 1978 it seemed a fitting end to a singularly gruesome episode. But it was evidently not to be. While Saxena languishes in jail, a string of bizarre happenings have kept the case in the public eye for the last few months.

The first unusual reports began trickling out in mid-February when the *Dainik Jagran* published a news item that a three-year-old girl named Meenu living in Bethar, a dusty village in Unnao district, claimed that she was a reincarnation of Saxena's murdered wife, Sudha. To prove her identity she was reported to have given detailed descriptions of the house where the Saxenas live. She also managed to relate intimate details of Sudha's life and claimed that Saxena and Bhagwati murdered her and took her daughter Putti away.

Large Crowds: When the news about Meenu spread, it brought the superstitious villagers flocking to Bethar from neighbouring villages. Word went about that a 'devi' had been born there. Before long, Meenu's father Inder Bahadur Singh, a carpenter in the village, was having trouble coping with the crowds which overran his house. But he was well rewarded for his pains, as many of the people presented large offerings to Meenu after they had had their darshan.

Inevitably, Saxena is the person worst hit by the alleged "reincarnation". He has been in jail since 1980 when the high court reduced his death sentence to life imprisonment. In 1978 Saxena and his paramour Bhagwati, a Nepali nurse, are said to have hatched a plot to kill Sudha. Saxena finally strangled Sudha and stuffed her body into a trunk. He got rid of the trunk by throwing it out of a train as it crossed the Ganga bridge in Kanpur.

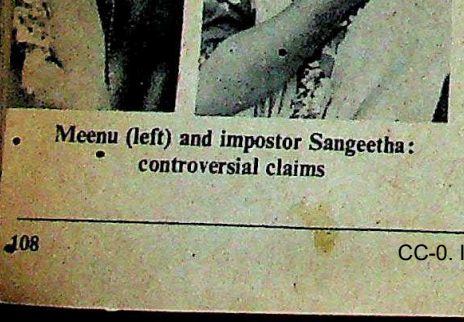
Saxena (left) and murdered wife Sudha: heinous killing

Saxena has an appeal pending in the Supreme Court for a remission of his sentence on the grounds that he is very ill. He claims that Meenu has been tutored to play her role by his father-in-law Sukhdeo Rai Sinha, to prejudice his appeal. He has even lodged a first information report against Sinha. He now claims that Sinha also took Meenu to his house in Murlinagar in Lucknow, and says, "The whole exercise is designed to defame me and affect my mercy appeal."

Saxena resorted to a very original ploy to prove that Meenu was a fraud. In the first week of March, stories started appearing in the newspapers that a two-year-old girl named Sangeetha, had also started claiming that she was a reincarnation of Sudha. She also spouted similar tales and regaled her audiences with minute details about her previous life. Within weeks, however, the news filtered out that Sangeetha was actually Saxena's niece.

Once they were caught at the game, as they had obviously intended to be, Saxena and his family freely admitted that they had trained Sangeetha to play her part. Says one family member: "If a two-year-old girl can talk this much, a three-year-old like Meenu can say even more." Adds Saxena: "My parents are playing at a drama just to cover my in-laws." And while the drama goes on there seems little likelihood that the curtain will come down on it in the near future.

—S. P.



Meenu (left) and impostor Sangeetha: controversial claims

BIHAR

Explosive Situation

ON APRIL 11, 1983, Mahesh Prasad Narain Sharma, the district magistrate of Gopalganj, Bihar, finished his work, glanced at his watch and walked down the stairs of his office. Waiting for him below was a young man with bloodshot eyes and a bag. Before Sharma realised what was happening, there was an explosion—and Gopalganj's district magistrate was dead.

A few hours later, Chief Minister Jagannath addressed a news conference in Patna called originally to highlight his Government's achievements under the new 20-point programme. "It is for the first time that a district magistrate was murdered on the soil of Bihar, particularly in the collectorate premises," said Jagannath in a choked voice.

To a state used to one murder every [illegible] hours, Sharma's cold-blooded killing came as a shock. "If a district magistrate, the custodian of law and order, is killed in such a way, imagine the fate of the common man who spend sleepless nights in thousands of villages," said opposition leader Karpoori Thakur. However, Jagannath said that "the murder of Sharma should not be taken as a failure of the Government or breakdown of law and order in the state."

Frightened Public: The people, however, no longer believe the Government's claim of "total peace" in the state, especially in Gopalganj, 200 km north-west of Patna, where they allege that "criminals run a parallel administration". Here, police say, "Baba" Sant Gyaneshwar Paramhans (real name: Sadanand Tripathy) has terrorised the people for the past six years.

Sharma, the murdered district magistrate, was one of those who dared to question the Baba's authority. The assassin, who was nabbed by the police soon after the killing, confessed to the crime. He said his name was Paramhans Yadav and that he was a disciple of Sant Gyaneshwar; he had renounced his family and the world to serve his "guru". "I killed the district magistrate at the insistence of my guru," confessed Yadav. He was supplied with the killer bomb from the local district jail where the guru had been imprisoned for some months.

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The 31-year-old Sant has 16 cases of murder, loot, torture, theft, assault and forcible occupation of land pending against him in Gopalganj. His headquarters was "Amarpuri Ashram", which had an unsavoury reputation. When district magistrate Sharma heard of the murky goings-on, he sent a team of officials to raid and search the ashram, which was illegally built on government land. The catch included a large number of bombs and firearms as well as 26 girl disciples. Baba and his followers were jailed.

The 5 ft 6 inches tall Sant is said to be politically well connected in Bihar and has a large following in the administration. He is alleged to be directly linked with the murderous attack on Ishwardeo Mishra, editor of the Hindi daily *Janavarta* in March 1981. The attack followed an exposé by the paper.

Mysterious Deaths: Meanwhile, panic is spreading among the people of Bihar. First the common people were attacked, then the politicians and now the administrators. Secretariat sources say that not less than 10 officials of various ranks including policemen had been killed in the state. Only last year, the then police superintendent Vinital Prasad nabbed a politician connected with a gang of criminals. A little while later, Prasad's young IAS wife, travelling in a jeep to Gopalganj, was crushed to death.

PICTURES BY ASHOK KARAN

Bomb victim Sharma's shattered body (above) and (below left) Sharma and Sant Gyaneshwar: unchecked mayhem

Similarly, Sharma's murder was preceded by a series of "political" murders in different parts of Bihar: on March 9, CPI(M) worker Masiha and his father were butchered in Saharsa district; eight days later another popular Marxist leader Jyotishprakash was shot dead in Buxar and after nine days, yet another marxist leader Jaydarth Sharma was murdered. According to state CPI leaders, as many as 100 political workers and leaders have been killed in the past two years. Official figures showed that in 1982 2,745 people were killed against 2,435 killings in 1981—an increase of 310 deaths.

Chief Minister Jagannath, however, continues to claim total peace in his state. He said over 48,000 criminals were rounded up last year and the entire police force was being modernized to cope with the situation. Five days before, the district magistrate was killed, 93 IAS and IPS officials were transferred and the post of five zonal inspectors-general was created to "tone up" the administration. However, as one senior IAS official said, these transfers were more politically motivated than aimed at improving the situation.

—FARZAND AHMED in Gopalganj

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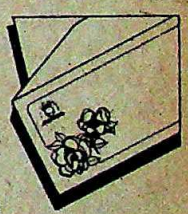

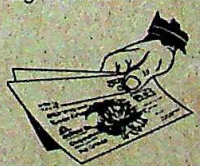

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STARTING PROBLEMS

THE BOOM in light commercial vehicles that was believed to be round the corner may not now materialise. Four companies had got the Government's clearance last year for manufacturing light trucks, and all of them had signed up collaboration agreements with Japanese companies: DCM with Toyota, Eicher Goodearth with Mitsubishi, Punjab Tractors with Hitachi-Daihatsu and Hyderabad Allwyn with Nissan. But the Japanese invasion of India's commercial vehicle market is likely to be aborted, as at least two of the four companies have developed second thoughts on their projects.

Only DCM has made substantial progress in its project, while the others have made little headway in the last year. Hyderabad Allwyn's project has got stuck following a change in the company's top management, and Punjab Tractors has made virtually no headway. Even Eicher Goodearth seems to be going slow. DCM is expected to use the opportunity presented by these developments to ask for an expansion of its authorised capacity as soon as the company's plant is commissioned next year.

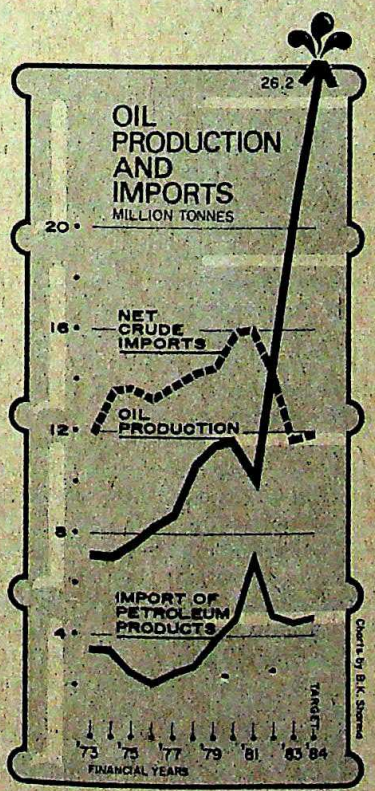
IG BROTHERLINESS

COMPANIES operating in fields where the Government has reserved fresh capacity creation for the small-scale sector have turned to unorthodox strategies for increasing their rnover without expanding production capacities. Firms like Bata dia (shoes) and Britannia Industries (food products), as well as me others, have decided on a two-pronged growth strategy: first, shift production to higher-value items that yield more revenues as ell as profits at the existing production levels and, second, to take the marketing of goods manufactured by the small-scale sector.

Both Bata and Britannia are devoting increasing attention to roviding the technical inputs that will help improve the quality of e products turned out by associated small-scale producers. The oducts can then be marketed by the "big brother" companies hich stand to benefit from trading profits without the risk of inesting capital in fresh production capacity.

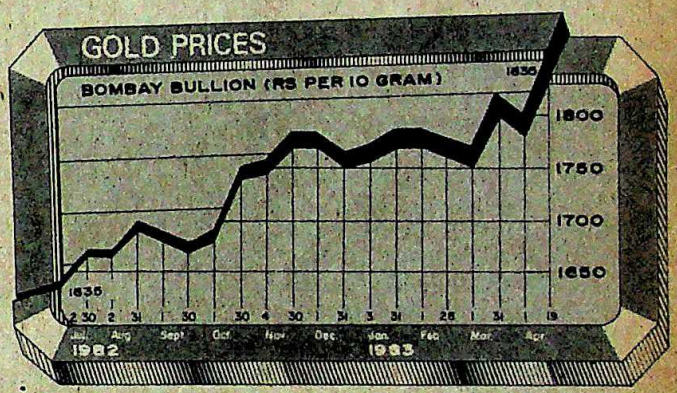
ILING THE WAY

NDIA may finally have licked its immediate oil problem: net foreign exchange spending on oil imports has dropped by over a ird, to between Rs 3,500 ore and Rs 4,000 crore. rude oil and petroleum oducts now account for ss than 30 per cent of the ountry's total import bill as against almost half of tal imports three years go. Since 1980–81, net imports of crude oil have dropped from 16.2 to less than million tonnes, and of etroleum products from 7.3 4.8 million tonnes. Proction has shot up from .5 to 21.5 million tonnes st year and an estimated million tonnes this year. self-sufficiency ratio has s increased from around per cent to between 60 d 70 per cent.



THE GOLD RUSH

GOLD has suddenly surged in the domestic market, rising from Rs 1,635 for 10 grammes last July to Rs 1,835 in Bombay early last fortnight—an all-time record level, cresting the 1981 peak of Rs 1,785. The price level in Madras was even higher at Rs



1,915. Trade circles attributed the rise to a decline in inward smuggling as well as heavy buying by industrial houses. A link was also being traced to the increase in wheat prices, which have risen rapidly in recent months because of the difficult food situation.

ORIENT FOR SALE?

ORIENT Vision, the TV manufacturing company promoted jointly by Robert Amritraj (father of tennis player Vijay) and the public sector Electronics Trade and Technology Development Corporation (ETTDC), may be up for sale. The likely buyer is the Kothari group, which has been making a major foray into electronics and has a large manufacturing facility neighbouring Orient Vision's factory in Tamil Nadu. A Kothari spokesman denied that a deal had been struck, but other sources confirmed that negotiations were under way.

Orient Vision was set up as an export-oriented company, but has failed to be competitive in international markets. There had been moves earlier to pull the company out of the red by permitting domestic sales of its TV sets, but this has not made much headway, although some domestic sales have taken place through a subsidiary company, Orientronics. Meanwhile, disputes have cropped up between the company and the ETTDC which had provided the raw materials and components to Orient Vision, but for which Orient Vision has now refused to accept any liability.

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POLICY

The Exports Dilemma

THERE are some questions to which only a minister can have answers. Not because he is Mr Know-all and keeps tabs on every nut and bolt in the Government machinery but because he is supposed to have a sixth sense about what his government is all about, for a government is much more than a sum of its parts, and it is this extra something, call it philosophy, call it morality, that differentiates one government from another.

What is the present Government all about? What does it really believe in? Does its economic policy match its social philosophy? Does it have a social philosophy and at what level do the two—social and economic policies—interact? If it believes in growth, as it obviously does, does it believe in growth at any cost? If not, where does it draw the line?

Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who is in his fourth month as Union commerce minister, is far too modest to claim that he knows all the answers. But unlike most other ministers, he is prepared, like President Johnson, to sit down and reason together. A politician who can throw up his job—not any job but that of chief minister of Uttar Pradesh—without even consulting Mrs Gandhi, is obviously a man cut from a rare piece of cloth.

When we met him in his office in Udyog Bhavan one evening last month, Singh was packing his bags for a trip to Buenos Aires on the first leg of a long journey that would take him to Geneva for an UNCTAD meeting and then to Bangkok. He had had a busy day and was visibly tired. We were interrupted twice, once when a delegation from Bulgaria trooped in to pay their respects (with a fine hand-woven rug which Singh promptly handed over to his secretary for valuation) and the second time when he was called away by the prime minister. He was back from the South Block in 15 minutes flat beaming from ear to ear like a schoolboy and muttering his apologies. "I am going to a Group 77 meeting in Buenos Aires, the first such meeting after the non-aligned meet and I was reporting to the prime minister on what we are up to," he said. Then we got down to business.

Export Rationale: Our first question was: why do we need exports? It is always a good question to kick off with, because if we are not sure why we need exports so desperately in the first place, you are not likely to have them. Why must we go after exports, we asked.

Singh went into a long and familiar rigmarole of an explanation about why a country X trades or has to trade with a country Y. There are the usual endowments a country possesses and it tries to make the best out of them. But all this is possible in an open economy—his words—with free, unimpeded trade, free flow of technology and many other assumptions. He explained patiently why in such commodities as sugar and jute and tea and coffee, most have-not countries—again his expression—were virtually at the mercy of the rich countries and multinational companies.

However, things worked fairly successfully as long as the Bretton Woods arrangement lasted but they fell apart when the West began to react to the oil price hike by the oil countries with their own price hikes of industrial goods. What they paid for oil, they tried to recover through exports and the money went back to them, but the net result world-wide was inflation coupled with recession. Commodity prices today are the lowest in this century except for the years of depression after World War I. A tonne of sugar in 1960 could buy 6.3 tonnes of copper. Today, it buys only three-quarters of a tonne.

Singh agreed that a new economic order was called for in our internal as well as external economic policies, for otherwise, he asked, what moral authority do we have to hold forth on international iniquities?

We asked why we were exporting sugar then, if all we could get in return was only one-tenth of what we did 20 years ago. Why should a country like India, with a large population of very poor people who cannot afford and do not consume even half a kilogram of sugar per month, export sugar? Why shouldn't our own people consume sugar? They have been waiting long enough, we said.

I have a counter question, said Singh. How do we import our machine-making machines?

Beneficiaries: Can we have an counter question, we asked. The questio we said, do we export for the benefit of a people, or very few people at the top, o the benefit of the people down below, you call the poverty-line people?

That is not a simple question, S agreed, but he said he would try and an it in his own way.

If we have to modernize our econo we have to import machines and we ca this in two ways. We can take loans from countries or ask them to invest here. T loans have to be repaid, not in our curre but theirs. For this, we have to move ou mething, something that we make and which there is demand outside the cou The demand is not decided or controlled us, it is decided by someone else. But w we move out something, we cannot and unless we can pay, we cannot loans.

We really don't have much of a s deciding what to export and what n export. We may have a surplus, b there are no buyers, you can't do it. surplus remains only on paper.

But what is a surplus, we asked. instance, two years ago, you, that is Government, were saying that there surplus of wheat and we were actuall porting wheat. But at the same time had people in India who could not af wheat, often not even for a meal a Would you call that a surplus?

Purchasing Power: Well, I would call that a surplus, said Singh, though looked as if he was not sure he should said that. Any other politician would looked the other way and turned question round to something less embar ing. Let us discuss specific commodities said, let us discuss sugar. We have re stocks of sugar this year, though prices low. Three years ago, prices were high the stocks were low. But despite re stocks this year, we are not able to mov sugar as prices in the international ma are very low.

But that only proves our point, we s Despite low prices, the stocks are high be se purchasing power is low and pe cannot afford to buy even at these low pri

There are three variables, Singh point out—production, consumption and purc sing power or poverty. What we move and what we keep depends on the inter of these three variables. At this point, cretary came in with a message from

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prime minister. Would he come right away? When he returned, he was full of beans. Why, we pressed on, did the Government always take the first two variables—production and consumption—into account, but never the third one.

That's not true, he said. What are you driving at?

OUR POINT was simple. You want exports, we said, to import machinery for industrialisation. Fair enough. The machines that are imported are used in the organised sector to give employment to people, again in the organised sector. So the people who are not in the organised sector and who live below the so-called poverty line and have virtually no access to the incomes produced in the organised sector are not benefited and are largely left out in the cold. These are the very same people whose lack of purchasing power creates export surpluses in the first place, and when the surpluses are traded in for imports of machinery, they are again left out in the cold. Surely, we argued, this is not fair.

"I agree with you," said Singh, his voice trailing.

If he agreed, we asked again, would he admit that the export policy, or, for that matter, the Government's foreign trade policy had no relation whatsoever with the social realities in the country?

I would agree with you, he said, that any programme of development cannot be divorced from the questions of employment, income distribution and perspectives in export. Economic development cannot take place without social costs. But not all our exports are of this kind (sugar). Exports of handicrafts, leather goods, polished diamonds create a lot of employment at home and are socially, as well as economically, relevant.

Heavy Price: Imports have also to match with the requirements of society. But development has always been a tough game. You must realise that we are importing capital goods from capital-surplus, labour-short countries into an economy that is short of capital and surplus in labour. Such transactions are bound to generate stresses all over. There is actually a dual sacrifice demanded from the country: one, capital formation, without which no modernization can take place and, second, human displacement. There is a terrific cost to be paid for all this, and, ultimately, as in everything else, it is the weakest who pay this cost. Even in international trade, it is the weak currencies that get into the death-trap.

The minister was not sure whether he should say all this. What would the people say if they were told that it was the weak and not the rich who ended up bearing the cost of development? But since this happened not only in India but everywhere else and was a fact of life, we assured him that he would not be misunderstood.

Now, if this was the case, referring to the call for a new international economic order that had gone forth from NAM for lightening the load of poor countries, would he agree that we should also call for a national economic order, for the sake of consistency, if not for anything else?

Singh agreed that a new economic order was called for in our internal as well as external economic policies, for, otherwise, he asked, what moral authority do we have to hold forth on internationl iniquities? But the issue of international relations was of a different order and would be fought on a different plane. As for internal economic policies, they would not only have to be consistent with our general approach in such matters but also for reasons of social cohesion.

HARYOM GULATI

Commerce Minister Singh: outspoken

Social Justice: If we are not careful we would end up creating oases of microscopic elites of wealth while carving out resources out of, say, agriculture and other impoverished sectors, and transferring them to relatively affluent ones. One day, the situation will become so politically critical that we shall not be able to maintain these oases of wealth at all. That is why, we say that we should temper growth with social justice, which is another way of saying that the social and political dimensions of economic activity, whether it is industrial growth or foreign trade, should not be ignored. He was himself very clear about this in his own mind.

This was almost certainly the first indication from the Government, at least at ministerial level, of a conscious attempt to perceive growth as an integration of political, social and economic models, and, although Singh did not spell out details, it was clear that he had given a lot of attention to the issue.

Singh said, in passing, that for a large country like India, exports were not that important. For a small country, exports are essential even for survival, which is not the case with India. Where a country needs essential imports from the outside, it should be able to generate enough funds through exports. Would he agree with the theory of export-led growth? He was not sure but, broadly speaking, it was his view that a country like India should be self-sufficient in its external account. We were not Hong Kong or Singapore, he said. We were more like the United States and Soviet Russia.

Stagnating Exports: Was the Government generally happy with exports? They had been more or less stagnant for years, in real terms at any rate, partly because of the general trade recession in the world, partly because of our own difficulties. But were we, by and large, on the road to self-sufficiency in our external account?

There were, he said, ups and downs, but things were beginning to look up and we were not doing so badly. There had been considerable improvement on the oil front and if the trend continued there may be a sea-change in our foreign trade pattern. They say the curve (of international trade) is bottoming out but he didn't know how large or broad the bottom was or would be and then there was always a time-lag in such matters.

One last question. Did he think that one reason why exports were lagging or not going up to the extent required may be that the society was resisting them? Could there be some social resistance because of the feeling that export surpluses were extracted by depriving society of its rightful consumption? This has happened in other countries when a society or large chunks of it have felt that something was being done that went against the grain of its perceived interests. There was, for instance, at one time a lot of resistance to the export of onions and vegetables to the Gulf from Maharashtra and also of rice.

No, he said, there was no such thing. By and large people believed that exports were in their own interest, long-and short-term. In fact, the people he met—admittedly they were producers, not consumers—complained that they were not exporting enough, not that they were exporting too much. "Even agreeing with all that you said earlier about social realities and all that, there cannot be such a thing as too much of exports at this critical stage of our development," he said, as he asked his secretary in to go over his brief for the Buenos Aires meeting.

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FOREIGN TRADE MARKS

A Spirited Comeback

FOREIGN brand names are making a spirited comeback into the country after facing a decade of barriers. Government policy since the early 1970s has actively discouraged the use of imported brand names on new products manufactured in the country. But giant publicity campaigns in recent months have made it clear that Indian consumers will soon have a string of new products made indigenously but sold under world-famous names.

In scooters, Vespa is making a major comeback, while Yamaha has already entered the country. Other entries are imminent, judging by the advertisements of two-wheelers in collaboration with companies like Agrati-Garelli. In another departure from the stated policy of the past decade, a company licensed to produce shaving blades and razors, in technical collaboration with Gillette, has been allowed to use the multinational giant's "7 O' Clock" brand name in marketing its products in India.

While a number of international labels have flourished over the years because of early entry into the Indian market (some examples being Philips, Colgate, Pears, Old Spice and Nescafé), there have also been cases of the Government having refused requests for the use of international brands. In 1978, the Civil Supplies Ministry refused to renew the trade mark registration of Sharpedge Ltd. which manufactured "Erasmic" blades under licence from the Anglo-Dutch multinational Unilever. And the Sarabhai group's Swastik Mills was investigated a few years ago to determine whether royalties were being paid indirectly for using the Max Factor brand name.

Unchanged Policy: The recent liberalisation in the use of international brand names has crept in without any change in government policy. Senior civil servants and ministers in fact reaffirm that the Government is opposed to the entry of foreign brand names even in cases where technical collaboration or foreign equity participation is involved. Commenting specifically on the use of the brand names Vespa and Yamaha by Lohia Machines and Escorts, Industry Minister N.D. Tiwari told the Parliament last month: "In accordance with the general policy on the matter, the Government has specified while granting approvals for foreign collaboration to Escorts and Lohia Machines that foreign brand names shall not ordinarily be used on internal sales of their products though there is no objection to using these brand names for export."

Government notifications and guidelines reinforce such pronouncements. The provisions of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) and the Trade and Merchandise Marks Act (TMMA) "discourage" use of foreign brands because of the unfair advantage they give to those who use these over domestic rivals.

FERA seeks to restrict the use of foreign brand names to goods meant for export, allowing them in India only in the case of life-saving drugs, pesticides and plant protection chemicals. However, FERA can be invoked only if consideration, direct or indirect, is paid for the use of the trade mark. Most existing international labels licensed to Indian manufacturers went uncovered by this law as the manufacturers insisted that

they had paid no royalties or other consideration to the foreign owners of the brand name. In many cases, however, payments may have been disguised—not a difficult task since companies often buy raw materials from their principals abroad.

Objections: To plug the gap in the law, successive governments have threatened to use the TMMA to refuse registration of imported brands. In March 1975, the then minister of state for industry and civil supplies, A.C. George, assured the Lok Sabha that FERA and TMMA were used in conjunction to see that the interests of domestic industry were protected. "At the time of granting approval for a foreign collaboration," he said, "a condition is invariably laid down that the Indian manufacturer will not use foreign trade marks on goods intended for sale in the internal market. This is irrespective of whether there is any royalty or payment involved."

Unlike technical know-how, manufacturing or marketing expertise, foreign brand names offer the country nothing but the accumulated goodwill in another market. The consumer gets no guarantee of [illegible] quality or of a more advanced [illegible]. Explained A.H. Kaji, director of Wilkinson India, a blade manufacturing company which has protested that the permission given to the Poddar group to market [illegible] blades as "7 O'Clock" will cut sharply into other domestic manufacturers' market. "This is highly unfair because it gives an edge to manufacturers on the basis of a foreign name even though they are yet to prove their manufacturing competence and establish market reputation."

Others frown upon the use of foreign brand names because they create a mental dependence among consumers, hooking them on to images built around international brands—and thereby perpetuating the role of international companies in areas where operations can be entirely indigenous. A leading soft drinks manufacturer pointed out that without the exit of Coca-Cola from India, Indian manufacturers would not have been able to establish their own soft drink brands and export their products—as they do now to West Asian and African countries.

New Trend: Bajaj Auto, which initially used the Vespa brand name for its scooters, switched later to Bajaj and reached such ascendancy in the Indonesian market that scooters in that country began to be called "Bajaj". Commenting on the new trend of international brands coming back, Rahul Bajaj, chairman of Bajaj Auto, said: "What emerges is that while the Government is supposed to have a policy on the subject there is no real policy in operation."

A spokesman of Lohia Machines, which intends to use Vespa's name on its scooters argues, however, that all vehicle manufacturers in India have used international brand names: Ashok Leyland, Tata Mercedes Benz, Lambretta, Bedford, Fiat and so on. "This is something that is normal in the industry," he said.

Government spokesmen point out that the likely introduction of new foreign brand names is a result of the Government's liberalised policy on foreign collaborations. Domestic manufacturers are signing new contracts with foreign companies in areas where no new foreign collaborations had been permitted for many years.

But manufacturers who are being forced to compete with the new international brands argued that official policy in this area is inconsistent and discriminatory. Said a Bombay-based consumer goods manufacturer: "We are not arguing against the need for better technology or better machines. We are acknowledging that we are so bankrupt as a nation that we cannot even think up our own names and need to borrow foreign names."

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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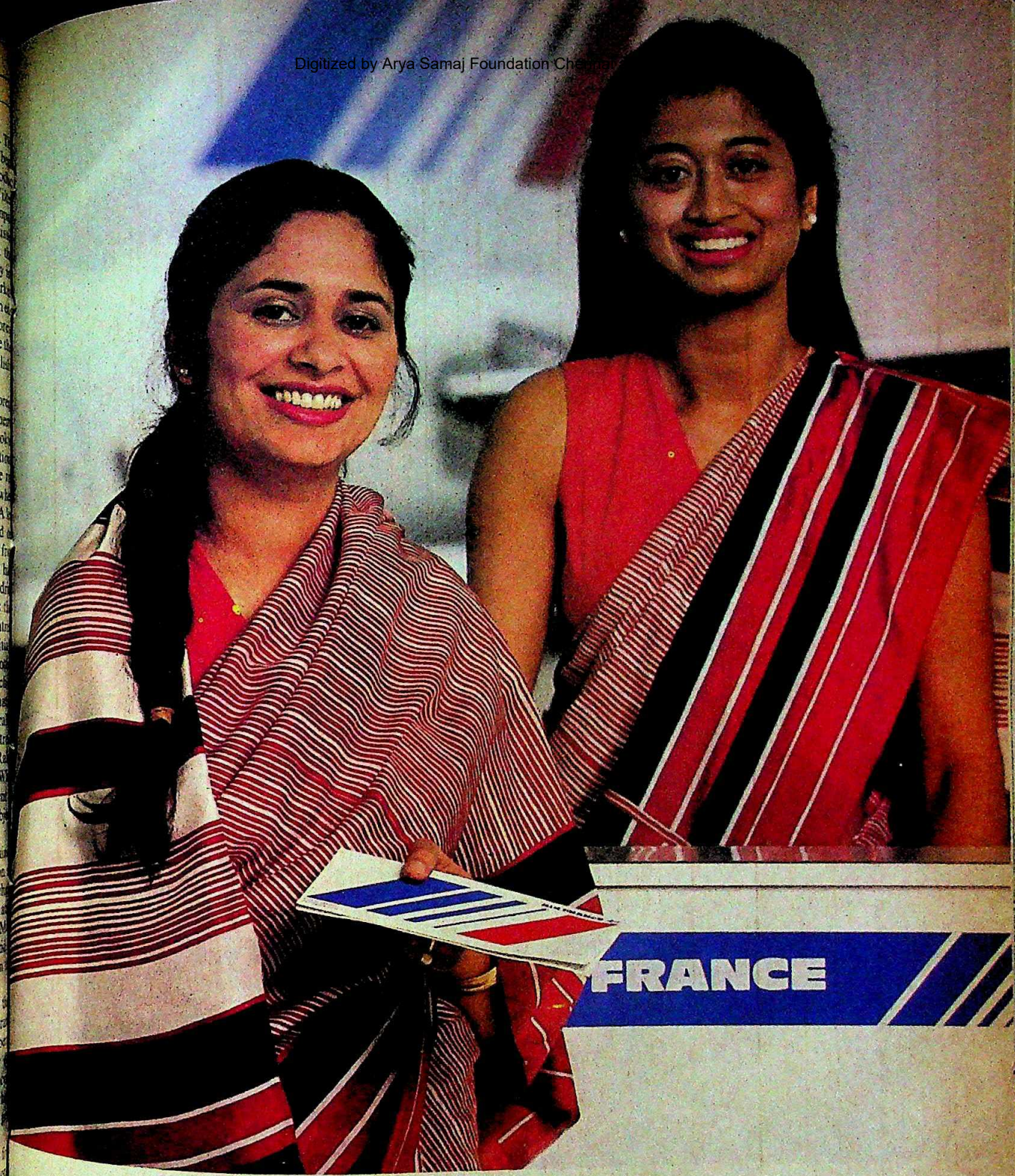

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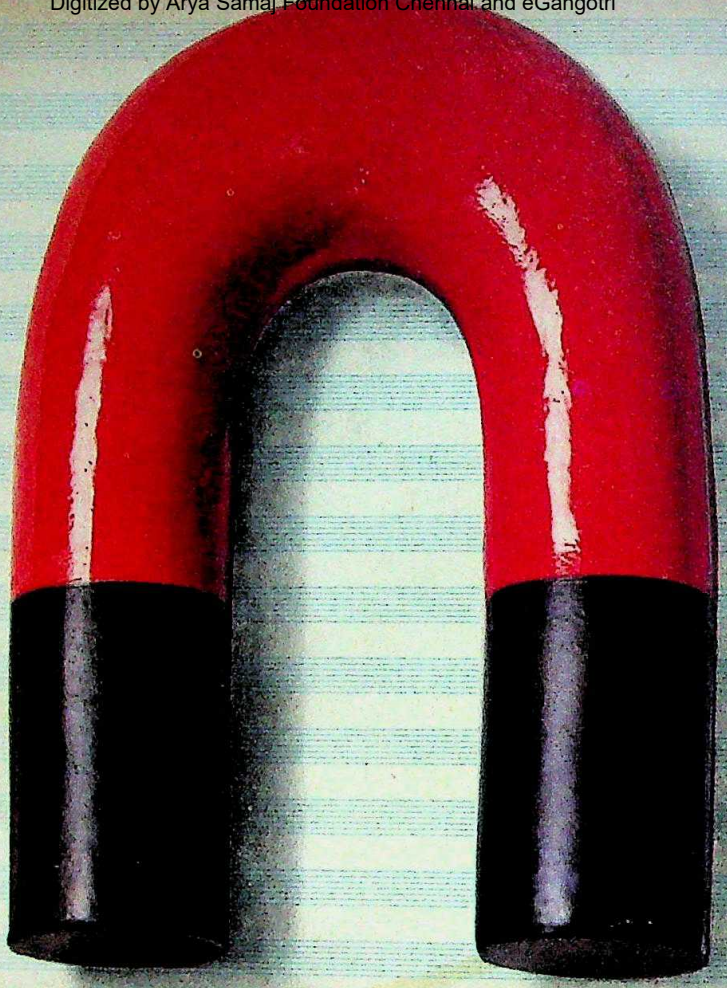

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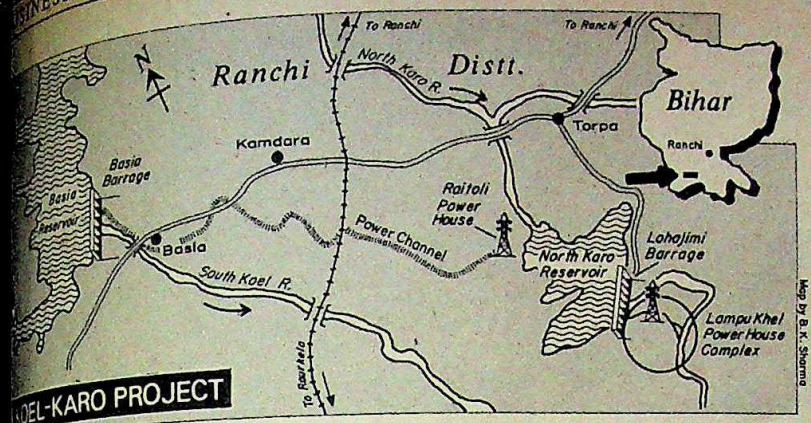


A Bleak Future

THE DEBRIS of abandoned projects litter Bihar. The way things are going it looks as if the multimillion-rupee el-Karo scheme to dam the south Koel north Karo rivers is destined to go the e way. Work has been brought to a grin- halt by militant tribals and the only ion on the project has been a war of words ween the state Government and the ntre Energy Ministry who accuse each er of delaying the project.

The latest obstruction to the project e when the tribals of the area put up anged wooden barriers to prevent outsi- s from entering their villages. The barriers e stayed as the state Government is reluc- t to offend the tribals. Chief Minister Ja- nath gave an indication of the way the d was blowing when he said: "No deve- ment can take place if it means destruc- of tribal society. We have to plan so that tribals are elevated to a level where they derive the benefits of industrialisation stead of impeding national development as sult of being bulldozed out of existence."

Organised Resistance: Jagannath's con- for tribal welfare is, like his name, new. But the political reasons for his govern- ment's inactivity are sound. The tribals of the region are well organised and have shown a remarkable determination to stand fast against the project. Soon after work began two years ago the villagers banded to- gether and formed the Jana Sangathan to protect their interests. The organisation has taken deep roots and by the side of the bar- riers to Darrang village the tribals have put up a three-point charter of demands. Under the demands is a stern warning that the tri- bals will not allow the project to continue unless their demands are met.

Officials of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) estimate that the project which involves building an earth dam 44 m high across the south Koel near Basia and a 55 m high dam across the north Karo near Lahajimi, 90 km from Ranchi, will en- compass more than 50,000 acres of land. Of this more than 41,000 acres including 12,500 acres of cultivable land, will be submerged and more than 3,500 people living in 100 vil- lages uprooted.

For the tribals this is nothing short of a disaster. They have learnt from previous experience that once they lose their land they will, in all probability, quickly be reduced to landless labour. Says tribal leader N.E. Horo: "First the youth of the region should be taught skills so that they can be absorbed in the project." Horo is not sanguine, howe- ver, and points out a promise to employ 500 tribals in the Heavy Engineering Corpora- tion (HEC) when it was set up in Ranchi 15 years ago has still to be implemented.

The Government has, of course, offered the tribals compensation for taking over their land. But the Ranchi-based Land Ac- quisition and Rehabilitation Directorate of the Bihar Government has yet to fix the amount. This despite the fact that the NHPC is said to be willing to offer generous amounts as compensation to placate the angry tribals.

Bleak Outlook: The adamant attitude of the tribals is slowly forcing officials to the conclusion that the project is unlikely to ever be completed though Rs 2.5 crore has alrea- dy been spent on it. There are more than 175 labourers on the site still but they are idle nearly all the time. Meanwhile the NHPC is cutting its losses by transferring engineers to other projects. The one group of people who are not going anywhere is the large cont- ingent of policemen headed by a senior police officer and a district magistrate. With the constant undercurrent of tension in the region their presence is considered indispensable.

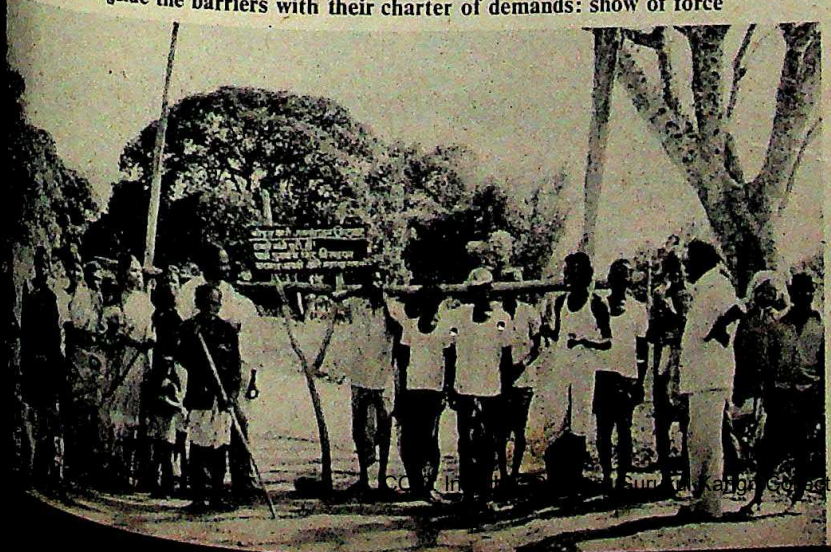
The NHPC's pessimism about the project also shows in the suggestion made last December that the Rs 25 crore Saudi Ara- bian credit for the project should be diverted to other schemes. NHPC Chairman-cum- Managing Director B.S. Kochar, however, insists that this proposal should not be given undue significance. But he firmly puts the ball back in the state Government's court saying that until the land is acquired the NHPC cannot continue. His views are backed by Minister of state for Energy Chandra Shekhar Singh who has also urged the state Government to expedite the acquisition of land.

Chief Minister Jagannath suggests that the Centre should plan a time-bound rehabi- litation programme to look after the inte- rests of the tribals. This, he says, should in- clude giving alternative house sites and loans for construction. Technical programmes, he says, should also be started to train youth and displaced families should be offered one job for every family.

But, whichever way it is looked at, the project's future appears bleak. The only person who sounds a note of cheer is Project Manager O.P. Mehta who says: "No project has ever been abandoned because of an agi- tation."

—FARZAND AHMED

Tribals alongside the barriers with their charter of demands: show of force



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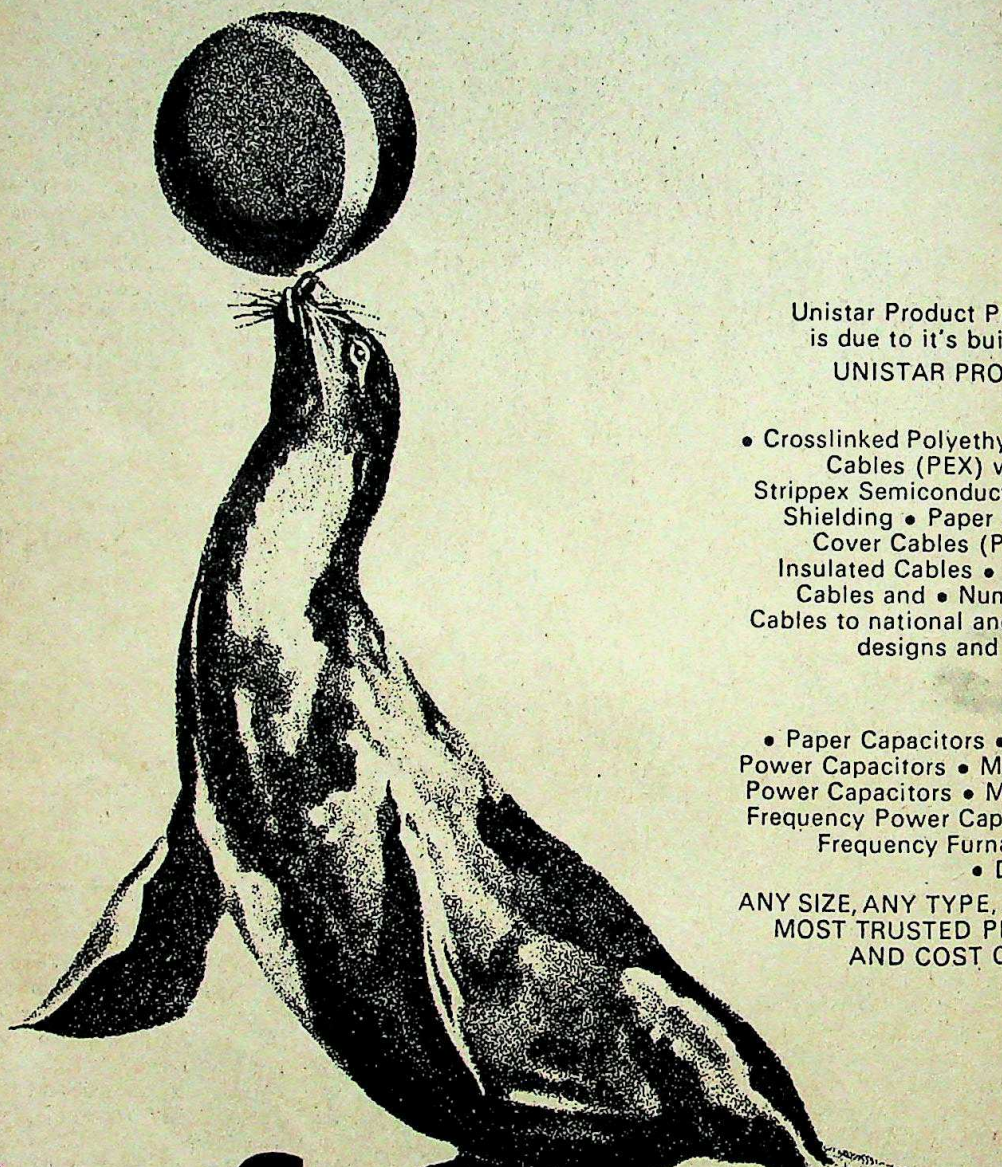

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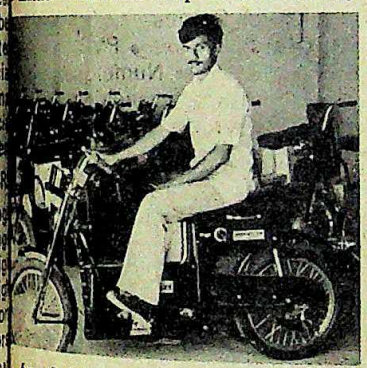
TWO-WHEELERS

Revving Up

WHEN Electromobiles India Ltd (EMIL), a joint sector undertaking, launched its electrically-powered two-wheeler vehicle in July 1981, it boasted that it had become the world leader in this field of energy-saving transportation. But three years later, after a total of Rs 2.35 crore had been pumped into the project, mainly by the Karnataka Government and state financial corporations, it had manufactured only 12 vehicles—which is not even 1 per cent of its planned production of 7,000 vehicles a year. It has yet to develop an economically viable, battery-powered two-wheeler and its current losses total Rs 70 lakh.

While production of two-wheelers has come to a standstill in EMIL's factory in Mysore, to its mortification last fortnight, Anil Ananthakrishna a 32-year-old engineering graduate launched his own version of a battery-powered two-wheeler, the Vidyut-24, which threatens to knock EMIL's model out of the market. With the help of the battery



Ananthakrishna and the Vidyut-24

Amco, Ananthakrishna was not only able to come out with a longer-lasting battery to power his vehicles, but has also developed a battery charger that has been approved by Amco. His total project costs so far—Rs 9 lakh. Ananthakrishna's company, Electro-Anil, had already released 100 vehicles and plans to manufacture 500 a month.

Competition: With a typical sour grapes reaction, EMIL inserted an advertisement in a local daily a day before Ananthakrishna launched his vehicle, warning manufacturers of electrically driven vehicles not to infringe on its patent rights for an energy regenerating and recouping system that it has incorporated in its vehicles. EMIL claims to have developed a complex system of micro switches which leads to a 25 per cent recouping of power when its vehicles go down a gradient. But Ananthakrishna is unperturbed by the warning because, as he points out, his vehicle makes no claim of recouping energy and employs a totally different power system. Says he, "It's just a ruse—a ruse to create doubt in the minds of people for our vehicle. I have not infringed anyone's patent rights."

When the advertisement failed to dissuade Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde and the Union Minister of State for Industry S.M. Krishna from attending the function to launch Ananthakrishna's vehicle in Bangalore, EMIL approached Amco and wanted them to supply the deep discharge battery which they had developed. But Amco placed a condition that unless it had a suitable battery recharger it would not supply its batteries to EMIL. EMIL officials were stumped because when their battery charger was tested by Amco it was found to be unsuitable. Said B. Ayappa, Amco's managing director: "As a commercial company we have no inhibitions about selling our batteries to any buyer. But we must ensure that the buyer has a good battery charger or else our name will get tarnished."

EMIL is now in a soup. Despite starting as a company in October 1975 with technical collaboration of a Swedish group, it has not yet been able to take off. In fact, last month the state Government had to release Rs 1 lakh because the company had not paid its 300 employees for four months. Say EMIL's Deputy Secretary K.V. Jayaraju. "We are suffering from a lack of finance and we need at least Rs 30 lakh to get us out of trouble."

Technical Requirements: While EMIL puts the blame on the state financial institutions for not releasing finances in time it has only itself to blame for its failure. The three key components in an electrically-powered vehicle are its motor, battery and battery charger. EMIL, like Electro-Anil, is importing its motor from a firm in the USA. But although it has been working on making a viable battery for more than eight years it is still to come up with a suitable unit. It initially used commercial automobile batteries which are not designed to take the load of a fully battery powered vehicle. The range an automobile battery gives is hardly 30 to 40 km before it needs to be recharged and can hardly take 50 recyclings, whereas the battery developed by Amco which Ananthakrishna is using can last about 80 km in one run and can take up to 700 recyclings. As a result, while the operating costs for Electro-Anil's vehicle is 7 paise per km, EMIL's model guzzles 24 paise per km. While Ananthakrishna's vehicle costs Rs 7,250 each, EMIL's price is Rs 9,500.

Another area in which EMIL failed was in developing a battery charger. Initially it was Ananthakrishna who supplied them with it, but when the arrangement fell through he went back to his drawing-board and developed a battery charger which automatically cuts off power when it is fully charged. In conventional battery chargers the major problem is over-charging which reduces the life of the battery considerably. When it started, EMIL took what is now considered a mistaken step of trying to develop and manufacture the battery and its charger by itself, and even tried its hand at developing the motor, whereas Ananthakrishna did just the opposite. He developed his own battery charger but worked closely with Amco and got it to manufacture a suitable battery.

Despite spending a whopping Rs 2.35 crore, EMIL is yet to get cracking and is still demanding more money. When it applied to the Karnataka State Financial Corporation (KSFC) for an additional Rs 26 lakh, the latter deferred the application because of EMIL's failure. According to a KSFC report, EMIL's "failure is because of mismanagement and non-development of suitable batteries". Far from being a 'world leader', EMIL is not even likely to lead in Karnataka with Electro-Anil having stolen a march.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

THE MARKETS

Share Cropping

THE STOCK market has gone as low as it can without actually tipping over. It is hanging on by the skin of its teeth amidst dire predictions of imminent collapse but things always look larger than life in the market particularly when nobody seems to be in charge. The main culprit, of course, is the budget which was something of a shocker and marketmen are apparently taking their time to adjust themselves to the new scheme of things. The corporate sector has made its peace but there is always a communication gap between the board room and the stock exchange floor. Until that is bridged, the men on the floor will continue acting as if they had seen a ghost.

Apart from Delhi Cloth Mills, Escorts and, surprisingly, Associated Cement, nearly all other blue chips have shed a lot of weight during the past fortnight and the load-shedding may continue until the market gets a hold on itself. There are many stories as to why Delhi Cloth Mills and Escorts have gained weight and some of them may be true. Some kind of churning is going on throughout the corporate sector which is buzzing with rumours of take-overs and family feuds, some of which again may be true. This churning process is a familiar phenomenon in the West and stock markets there take it in their stride. But investors here are not used to it yet and are at a loss to know what is going on. However, the process cannot go on indefinitely and things should stabilise when the heat is off, which may be sooner than

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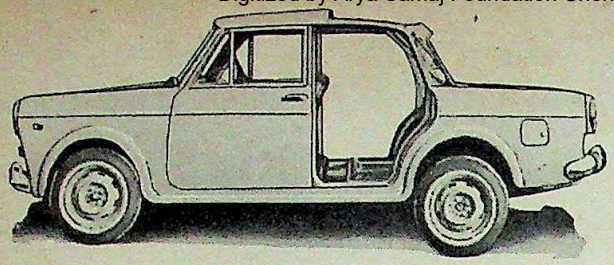

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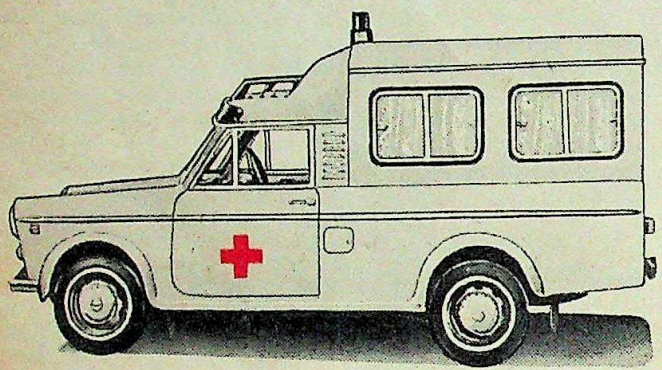
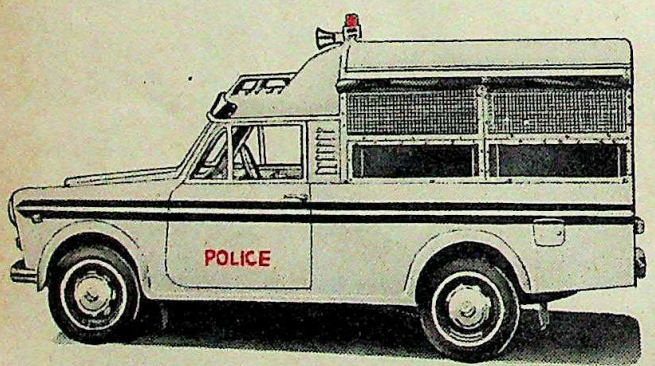
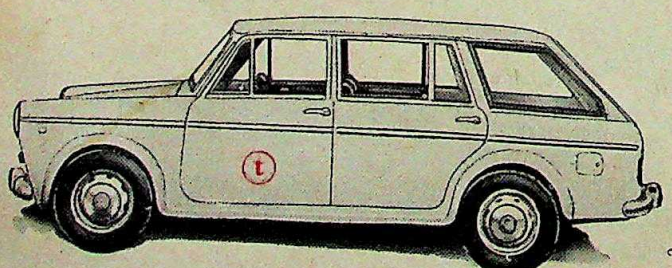


SAB 23 Ambulance
(with extended wheel base)



SAB 23 Police Van



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SAB 23 P: POLICE VAN Standard fitments like siren, flickering light, space for wireless set, fire extinguisher & a built in carrier. Ideal van for patrolling or troop carrying. Suitable modifications for more speed provided at extra cost.

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SAB 23 T: TOURIST With extended wheel base for extra driving pleasure. Also extra legroom, broader seats and more headroom makes the car really comfortable. Easy maintenance and better mileage compared to other car-makes. Ideal for touring executives, long journeys, family trips etc.

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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High	Low	Close	Change on Fortnight
	1983		19.4.83	
Sarabhai	17.75	13.25	13.25	(0.75)
Leyland	36.50	30.75	30.75	(1.75)
	35.00	31.50	31.50	(0.50)
Paints	406.00	350.00	366.00	7.50
Cement	1,200.00	1,025.00	1,165.00	85.00
Auto	42.80	37.25	37.25	(1.25)
	257.00	210.00	213.00	(0.50)
Rayon	54.60	47.60	49.75	(3.35)
Jute	75.00	57.50	62.00	(1.50)
Dyeing	28.20	26.00	26.00	(0.90)
Bond	246.50	190.00	192.00	(6.00)
Mills	205.50	195.00	200.00	(5.00)
Tyres	810.00	695.00	750.00	(2.50)
Spinning	57.50	51.00	53.05	(1.70)
India	94.00	84.00	87.00	(3.00)
	68.75	32.31	67.09	3.28
Mills	23.70	20.10	21.25	0.15
India	22.00	20.00	20.25	(0.50)
Hotels	58.06	39.75	58.06	3.06
	31.50	21.25	21.25	(0.25)
	21.75	18.50	18.50	(0.80)
Fertilisers	490.00	429.00	456.00	15.00
Rayon	52.00	43.75	43.75	(2.25)
Aluminium	38.75	32.10	35.80	0.55
Lever	56.50	51.75	52.50	(0.50)
Motors	35.10	26.40	26.40	(2.12)
Aluminium	20.00	16.25	16.25	(0.65)
Cable	23.00	21.80	22.10	(0.05
Explosives	26.20	22.00	22.00	(1.80)
Organic	33.50	25.50	29.00	nil
Oxygen	34.50	30.40	30.40	(2.10)
Rand	87.00	80.00	81.50	(1.50)
	44.85	34.80	36.00	0.50
Tea	28.10	20.35	25.50	1.00
Synthetics	57.50	32.50	32.50	(4.60)
Engineering	85.00	68.00	72.50	(2.50)
	87.00	70.00	71.00	(4.00)
	65.40	57.30	63.00	(1.75)
Engineering	163.00	68.00	73.00	3.00
(Madras)	24.00	18.00	20.10	0.10
& Toobro	57.50	52.00	53.00	1.00
Machines	61.25	42.50	58.00	(2.00)
Coats	22.60	16.35	16.35	(0.90)
& Mahindra	56.00	42.00	42.50	(2.50)
Rubber	28.62	22.69	28.19	2.32
Industries	257.50	230.00	230.00	(5.00)
Iron	24.00	20.00	20.25	(0.50)
Organic	26.00	20.35	20.35	(0.15)
	207.50	160.00	160.00	(10.00)
Paper	39.25	34.00	34.00	(0.25)
Electronics	47.10	40.20	40.20	(0.70)
Auto	29.25	24.70	25.35	0.35
	376.00	229.00	240.00	(9.50)
	40.75	36.00	36.75	nil
Rand	183.00	162.00	164.00	(8.00)
Wallace	22.25	19.00	19.62	(0.19)
Fibres	39.05	33.20	36.75	(0.75)
	32.12	27.75	30.44	(0.75)
Products	17.55	15.25	17.55	1.55
Chemicals	46.80	38.30	39.25	0.95
Steel	67.00	49.50	49.50	(3.50)
	301.50	237.00	281.00	25.00
	455.00	350.00	366.00	3.00
Investments	45	38.00	38.00	(0.80)
Carbide	18.00	16.00	17.50	(0.10)
Martin Black	25.10	21.90	21.90	(0.60)
Sperry	24.80	22.00	23.00	0.50
	20.50	16.50	17.00	(1.00)
Nizamsugar	283.00	262.00	268.00	nil
Agro	19.50	15.00	15.50	0.50
Trust (sale)	26.20	22.40	25.30	(0.45)
	13.95	13.60	13.95	nil

most people imagine.

Another complicating factor is the prevailing uncertainty about how good—or bad—this year is going to be. Rains last week are said to have damaged the rabi crop in the north, though the damage is said to be marginal. If the monsoon continues to play funny, the country may have to face another poor year which it may not be able to manage without something giving in. And that something may be industrial production, the very base supporting the corporate sector. It is again too early to predict how things will work out eventually and all may indeed be well in the long run but marketmen are naturally keeping their fingers crossed.

Satisfactory Performance: Company reports are by and large satisfactory and company bosses do not sound as if they have given up the ghost. Shriram Fibres, a member of the Shriram Group, is diversifying from synthetics into chemicals and is going even further into engineering with a new Rs 10-crore project for making automobile electrical ancillaries. Peico Electronics profit margins were under pressure throughout the year but the company has added considerably to its product lines and started marketing its own refrigerators. SPIC, the Madras-based company which is not as well known in the north as it should be, has produced an excellent report with sales exceeding Rs 400 crore (in the last 18-month period) and wiping out cumulative losses so far. SPIC is among the country's top 20 companies and the scrip has considerable potential for growth.

Fresh concessions in the last budget for non-residents seem to have created a scare, though it is not clear why only two companies in the north should have attracted so much attention. But unless the loopholes are plugged, the funds, which may not necessarily be from non-resident sources except on paper, may find their way into other companies as well as other markets, including the large commodity market which is normally sensitive to such flows. Gold and silver prices have been rising steadily for some time which may also be an indication of the shape of things to come. Money makes the markets go but too much money can unsettle things beyond repair and when that happens the damage is likely to spread from the bullion and other markets to the share bazar. This is possibly one reason why many investors are holding out and letting the market sink in the hope of cashing in on the rising tide later on. In such a situation, the wisest man is one who watches the fun from the sidelines and it looks as if there will be more watchers than players in the ring for a long time to come.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency	TT Selling Rates (Rs)	TT Buying Rates (Rs)
Australia	1 As $	8.8153	8.7189
Austria	100 As Sch	58.8130	58.1971
Bahrain	1 Dinar	27.4099	27.2050
Bangladesh	100 Taka	42.2708	41.9553
Canada	1 Can $	8.2450	8.1567
Egypt	1 Egp £	12.2635	12.1720
France	1 Fr Frc	1.3783	1.3636
Hong Kong	1 HK $	1.4858	1.4693
Indonesia	100 Rupiah	1.0508	1.0429
Iran	100 Rial	12.1245	12.0340
Italy	100 Lt Lira	0.6910	0.6847
Japan	100 Jap Yen	4.2901	4.2460
Kenya	1 K Shilling	0.7898	0.7839
Kuwait	1 Dinar	34.9007	34.6402
Malaysia	1 ML $	4.3980	4.3454
Mauritius	1 Rupee	0.9190	0.9121
Nepal	1 Rupee	0.7721	0.7664
Netherlands	1 D Glds	3.6709	3.6316
Pakistan	1 Rupee	0.7996	0.7936
Singapore	1 Sing $	4.8303	4.7766
Spain	100 Sp Pt	7.3774	7.3099
Sri Lanka	1 Rupee	0.4473	0.4439
Sweden	1 Sw Kr	1.3545	1.3392
Switzerland	1 Sw Frc	4.9200	4.8674
Tanzania	1 T Sh	1.0640	1.0560
Thailand	100 Baht	44.0000	44.0000
UK	1 Pound	15.6384	15.4979
USA	1 US $	10.1000	9.9625
UAE	1 Dihram	2.7730	2.7523
USSR	1 Rouble	14.1262	14.1170
W. Germany	1 DM	4.1316	4.0875

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on 22.4.83.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

	Latest	Change on month
PRICES		
ET Commodity Price Index*		
April 19, 1983	259.8	3.8
Cereals	267.2	(4.7)
Chemicals	358.0	(1.5)
Industrial Fibres	185.9	3.1
Metals	352.0	2.8
Sugar	204.5	11.0
Textile Yarns	218.5	(0.4)
Vegetable Oils	307.2	19.3
Gold, standard, April 19, 1983 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,835.00	65.00
Silver, .999 April 19, 1983 (Rs per kg)	3,400.00	365.00
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index*		
April 19, 1983	232.2	(7.6)
Cement	222.8	(7.0)
Chemicals	188.0	(15.6)
Engineering	403.8	(11.1)
Fertilisers	201.8	(4.1)
Man-made Fibres	340.5	(28.2)
Paper	428.0	(25.5)
Rubber Goods	148.0	(9.8)
MONEY		(per cent)
Money Supply, March 4, 1983		0.5
Bank Deposits		0.3
Foreign Exchange Assets		(12.3)

*1969–70 = 100

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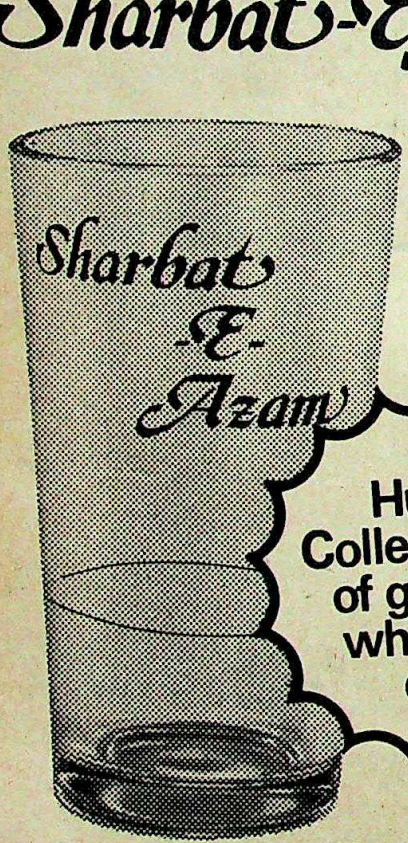

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The Classical Approach

THERE appears to be a crisis looming over Hindustani classical music today. A full season of concerts will make it clear that somehow the fire has died down. And this, we must remember, is in e of the fact that Hindustani musicians e never had it so good as in the past de or more. Concert fees not exactly a pittance, ugh travel and perfor- ces abroad are less rare, that at least a small ber jet and train about ften as Luciano Pavarot- Zubin Mehta, although haps not quite as luxu- sly. Foreign students— Peters, the Richards and Cindys—carry tanpuras sitars about with them; if they have a violin or a o, even manage to tune n without causing raised brows.

Not very long ago, you ld go to a concert and n with rapt attention to like Abdul Karin Khan, az Khan, the great Bade lam Ali Khan, or en like Kesarbai Kel- Hirabai Barodekar or heshwari Devi. The list long one, yet hardly plete. Their styles were ous, their talents dissimi- but all of them had a cer- characteristic in com- : They were all intense hypnotically alive. Their s seemed to flow not so h from their uncom- ly honed *swaras* but n their very gut; and all hem in their different s had a quality of un- melled freedom and in- ndence of spirit. They ed to live beyond the ing economies of the d outside, the stoop- ldered bureaucracies of ms and institutions. fact made their concerts a precious weight of nence and beauty, a n of delicious expecta- which was larger than the specifics of their art—a subtle voltage that sparked and arced in their music.

Vanishing Quality: This *frisson*, this feeling of hovering static, like the charged air before a thunderstorm, seems to be rapidly diminishing in Hindustani classical music concerts. This quality is apparently not something which can be produced by choreography from the outside, but is the result of an inner quality, the way the art has been realised in the performer. The light, to my mind, is turning amber in Hindustani music. It is not red yet. It may soon be if something both wise and perceptive is not done to it, very soon, to put it back where it has always belonged.

Many musicians in India lament this situation and feel that this has happened on account of the tearing hurry which students of music seem to be in, to get a platform for a public performance. This precludes the kind of teaching ambience which in the old days used to be called *sadhana* (dedication). Describing this as an essential condition for true and significant creativity in raga music Kumar Gandharva says, "The absence of *sadhana* is like looking at the world with only one eye. If you close one eye and look about the room, the chairs and the windows, the glasses on the table, all shed a dimension. Things are so flat that there is nothing further to be said about them. It is the same world without the roundness of significance. Without *sadhana* music can only be clever or competent or sweet, but will have no true significance." Pir Vilayat Khan in a seminar in Paris in 1974 called the effort to sidetrack the need for a valid connection with a guru as a form of cowardice. "You cannot have a guru on a three-hour-a-week, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays basis. And if you have never had a guru your music will have an empty centre."

Basic Difference: In this respect, Carnatic music fares much better than Hindustani music. For there is between them a basic difference in their approach to *raga*, *sahitya* and inspiration. The Carnatic style is based on the luminous genius of the great saint-composers of the southern tradition, fully calibrated utterances of poetic

(Clockwise from top left) Amjad Ali Khan, Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan and Vilayat Khan: lifelong dedication

It is this *sadhana* that has always been a pivotal issue in Hindustani music; a technique of musical awakening that has been hitherto hidden in the recesses of the *guru shishya parampara*... If the music is gathered through any other means it shows through all artifices, joss sticks and pashmina shawls.

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vision and musical virtuosity. Even the bhavas permitted in it have been gently, unobtrusively formalised. On the other hand, Hindustani classical music is a wide open prairie, a kind of Apache land without a sheriff. Today in this *laissez-faire* economy practically anything goes—and what goes is invariably the ubiquitous *ghazal*, full of sweetness and syrup in the place of forthright musical nutrition.

A simple experiment would make clear the difference between the predicaments of these two major systems of Indian music. Take two children from the same family and teach one of them the Hindustani system and the other the Carnatic. In three years, assuming that the children are equally gifted, the Carnatic student would be chirruping away with several *varnams* under his belt, and if he were also audacious and fun-loving he would even have taken a crack at the *kritis*. Nothing dramatic or significant yet (unless the child is also eerily gifted as many are), but adequate and full of promise. At least some part of the Carnatic student's repertoire could be recited by him without a hitch. He would thus escape ignominy.

In Carnatic music the student is free from racking doubt and conflict and what is even more important, free from the agony of having to find oneself through liberating *sadhana*.

The student of Hindustani music after three years would, like as not, be wobbling around, still going off-key sometimes, sounding rote and arthritic; and as for any creativity or originality the less said about these the better. Before the Hindustani music student is ready to make a statement for himself through his music, some decades have to pass. In the Carnatic school this responsibility has been transferred to the saints. In Carnatic music the student is free from racking doubt and conflict and what is even more important, free from the agony of having to find oneself through liberating *sadhana*.

IT IS this *sadhana* that has always been a pivotal issue in Hindustani music; a technique of musical awakening that has been hitherto hidden in the recesses of the *guru-shishya parampara*. It is *sadhana* that produces people like Kumar Gandharva, a Ravi Shankar, a young Amjad Ali Khan, the Ali Akbars and Vilayat Khans of our recent tradition. If the music is gathered any other means it shows, through ces, joss sticks and pashmina sha possible in Carnatic music with so footwork to skirt the issue of a gu Hindustani sense, and to let a classr riculum take the sting off the tragic an ennobling connection with one the best way, perhaps, but still good not to make too material a differen end-product—except to the most fa

Indispensable Factor: The Hi school is aware of this problem, t ward need for a valid relationship guru, and has been trying desperate velop alternative methods. These have not been notably successful. Walkman or a Ravox, take over living presence: hypnopaedic teachi niques that try to internalise, for e Marwa's sad and forlorn rishabh, or gle Darbari's solemn gandhar into conscious through speakers that while your conscious mind is asleep. hours of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan slo spool on stainless steel decks, trying a path into the lunar clarity and focus of his style.

The young Amjad Ali Khan, so legendary Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan, on foremost sarodiyas, feels that "the o nity for gaining *taaleem* (learning) is by the young in their hurry to reach a platform. A true *taaleem* cannot be by technique and flair alone and ca transmitted by charging fees by the advance. What is called *sadhana* is tude of mind, a manner of approach and work that goes beyond mere into a realm which our forefathers ca ritual."

The brothers Dagar of the disting gharana of Dhrupadiyas feel the "Aspirants want quick results. The of musical education is an unfolding mechanical skill or mere knowledg comes from *shraddha* (devotion)" Ravi kar in his autobiography makes a pas plea for the kind of devotion and one edness which transforms. He hims passed through the stage of a long man-about-town to the final figu straddles cultures and continents.

It is possible to see a glory in t formances of these great men and wo our tradition which reflects a glory performers. It is *sadhana* that, on all makes this difference. Its presence pr power, and an authority that tra analysis. And *sadhana* is possible through the *guru-shishya parampara*. result of a total relationship, howeve or varied. It is difficult to substitute th tionship by buying a Uher however h wattage.

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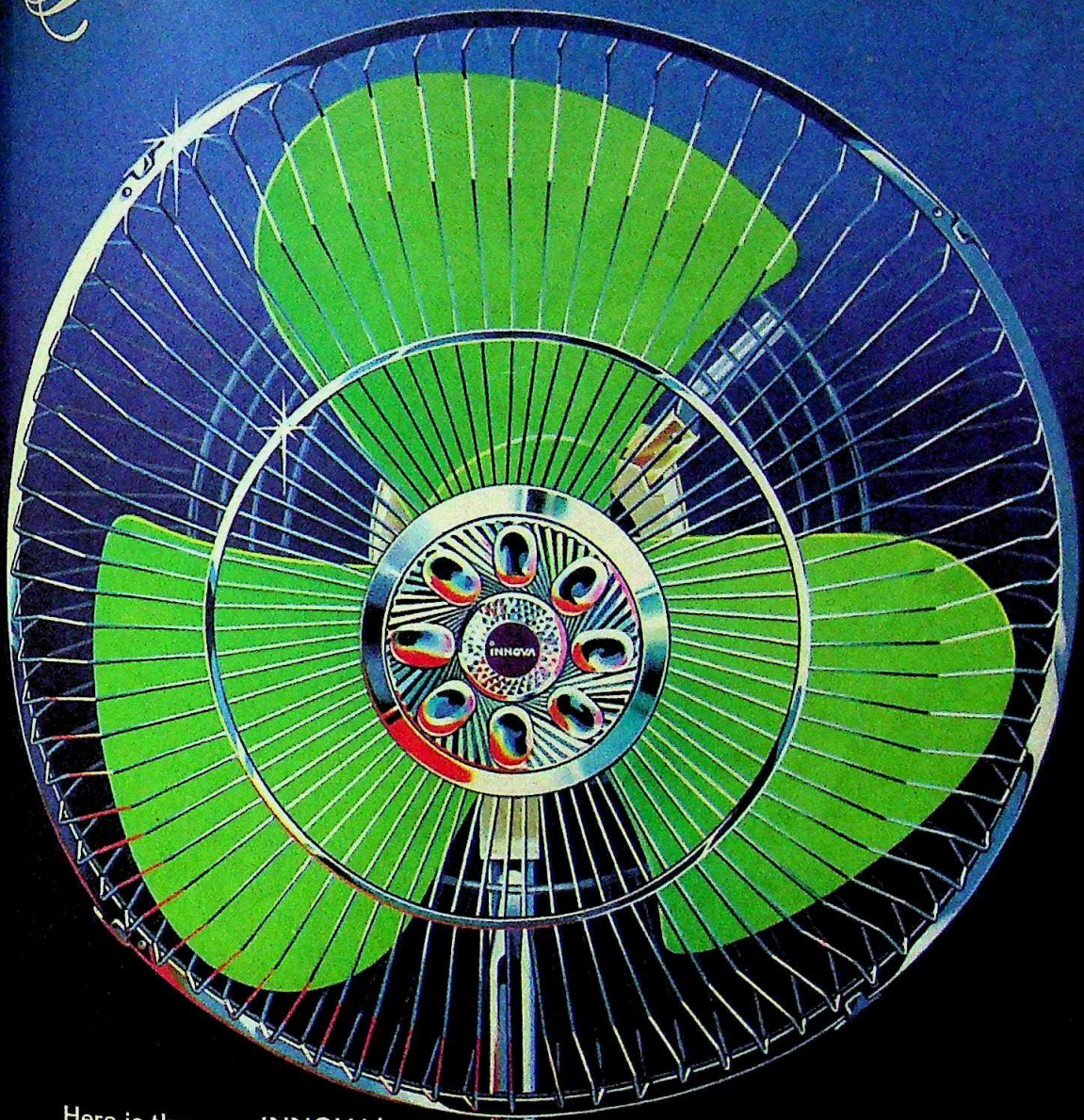

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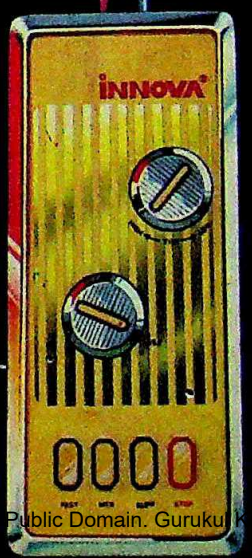

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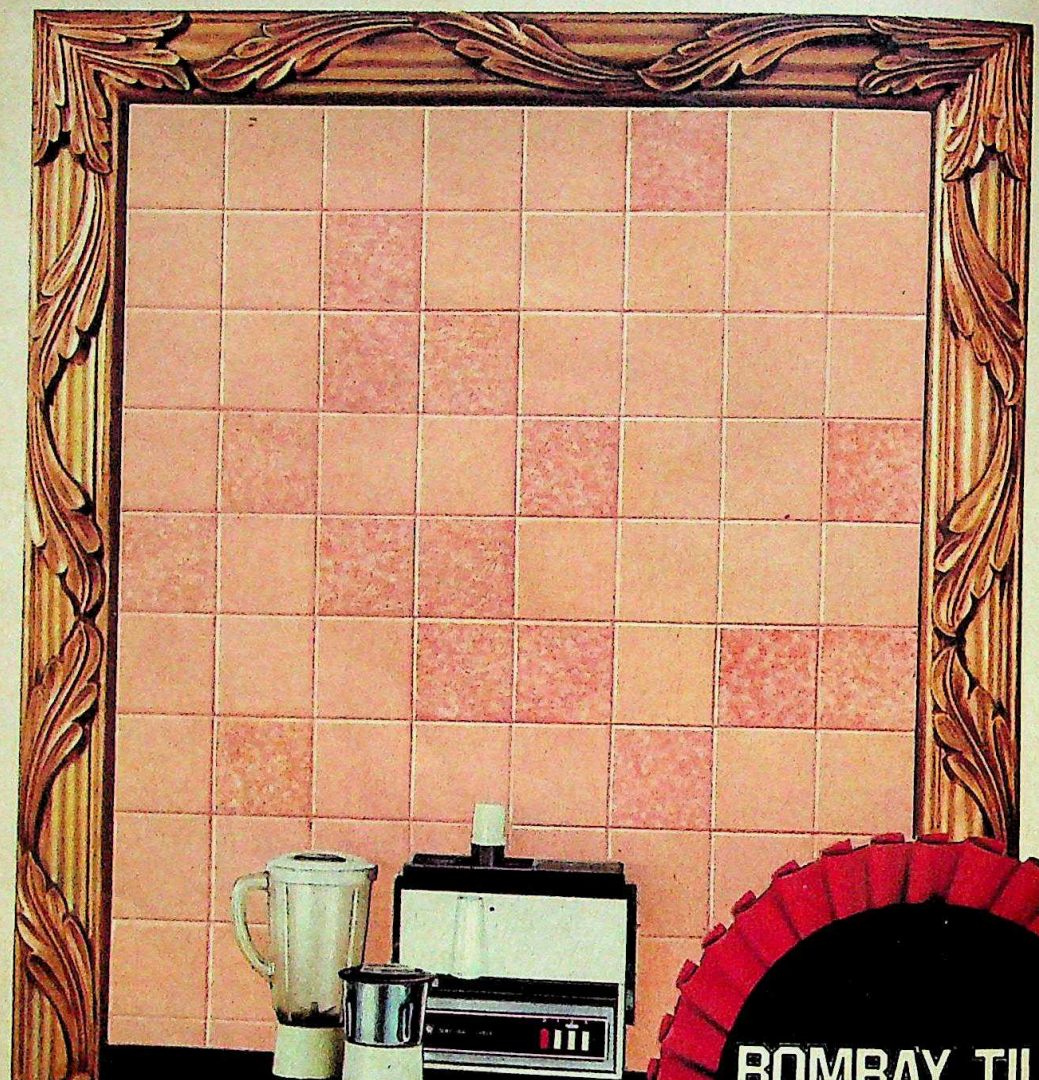

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MIL NADU

truggle For Control

A TEN-YEAR long war of attrition is coming to the boil in Tamil Nadu Last fortnight. Hindu gious and Charitable Endowments ister R.M. Veerappan announced in Legislative Assembly that the state ernment was formulating special slation to take over the administra- of the historical Lord Nataraja ple in Chidambaram in South Arcot rict. A famed shrine of the Saivites, 40-acre temple is the only large reli- us institution in Tamil Nadu that still ains beyond the reach of the Govern- 's Hindu Religious and Charitable owments Board (HRCEB).

Decrying charges of ulterior mo- s, Veerappan said unequivocally: are intervening only because there e been numerous complaints of mal- inistration of the temple by the shitars (priests). The Dikshitars do maintain proper accounts of the ome and expenses of the temple, nor they have clear records of the temple's ets. There are no *hundis* or metal fers for devotional cash offerings in temple. With the result that if a otee wants to offer cash to the temple, has no alternative but to hand it over the Dikshitar and there is no guaran- that the money will not be misused. ilarly *archana* rates or fees for priests chant the name of a deity—a lakh or ore at times—are not put down in k and white in the temple. So cre- us devotees can be fleeced by the sts who can demand exorbitant es."

In support of his allegation Vee- ppan revealed that some 910 acres of disclosed temple lands had been un- ched by the HRCEB between 1977 and 1. These lands have now been leased for an annual rent of nearly 40,000. In addition, unaccounted d rods worth Rs 3 lakh were dis- ered inside the temple during a sur- e inspection by the jewel verification cer and the Chidambaram sub-collec- in June 1981. Asked he: "How can state Government remain a silent ctator to this sort of mismanage- nt?"

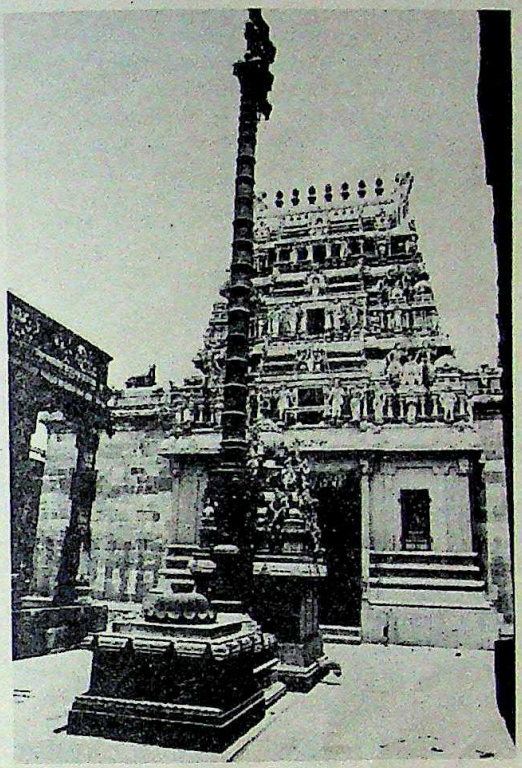
Strong Reaction: Official statements e elicited a spirited response from the shitars, a small community that cur- ly stands at 1,000 people spread r 200 families. Said R.N. Nataraja ma Dikshitar, secretary of the nine-member managing committee of temple trustees: "We do subsist on the monetary help we receive from the devotees and the public, but that doesn't mean that we lay our hands on the assets of the temple itself. It is true that we have no *hundis* or much book-keeping in our cash management but that shouldn't make us guilty of misusing temple funds." Added Gunasekara Dikshitar: "How can you believe that we have been making money on the sly from the temple? Most of us live in very poor conditions in shacks and depend for food mainly on food offerings at the temple."

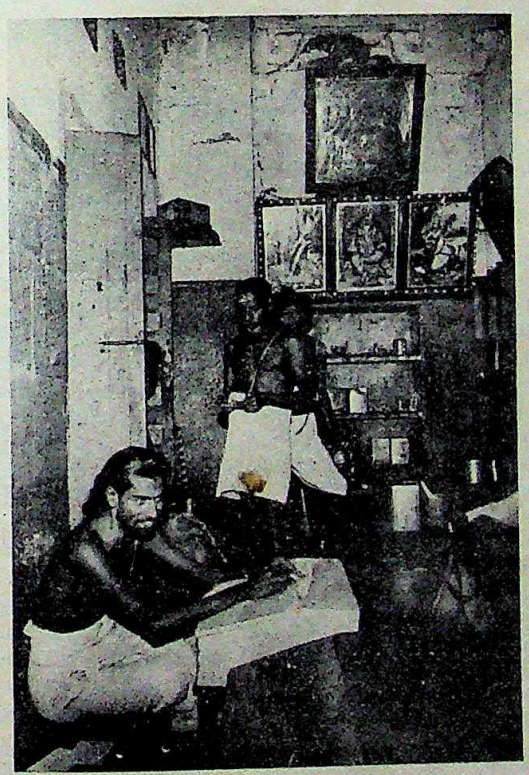
However, an aberration from this concerted defence is the revolt against the insulated and strongly united community by half-a-dozen Dikshitars led by former trustee Pattumani. Said he: "The fact that the life-style of most Dikshitars is not prosperous does not prove that they have no ill-gotten wealth. Many Dikshitars spend lavishly on the marriages of their sons and daughters."

Meanwhile, impending action by the Government has fuelled fears of state interference in the temple's religious rituals. Said hoary Nagaraja Dikshitar worriedly: "As far back as history goes, prayers and rituals in the temple have been performed meticulously by the Dikshitars. There has not been a single reported instance of a ritual being performed or a prayer being chanted even slightly late. A government take-over cannot but have a deleterious effect on this religious excellence."

Scope: Veerappan was quick to counter this by pointing out the limits of state intervention. Said he: "We want to take charge of merely the financial, administrative and secular affairs." But the attempt to assuage doubts has held little meaning for the temple's custodians. Retorted P. Natrajan, one of the Dikshitars' lawyers: "The state Government's intentions do not seem to be bona fide. Where is the guarantee, that it is going to stop with mere financial and administrative control?"

Reiterating their determination to fight, Secretary Nataraja Ratna Dikshitar added: "Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees every religious denomination the fundamental right to manage its own religious affairs. So if the Tamil Nadu Government steps into the affairs of the Nataraja Temple, it will be trampling on the right of the Dikshitars to manage their own temple. We will definitely go to court in that case." With the high stakes involved, this long drawn out battle seems all set to enter its final judicial phase. —S.H. VENKATRAMANI





The Nataraja Temple (top) and Nataraja Ratna: opposing the take-over

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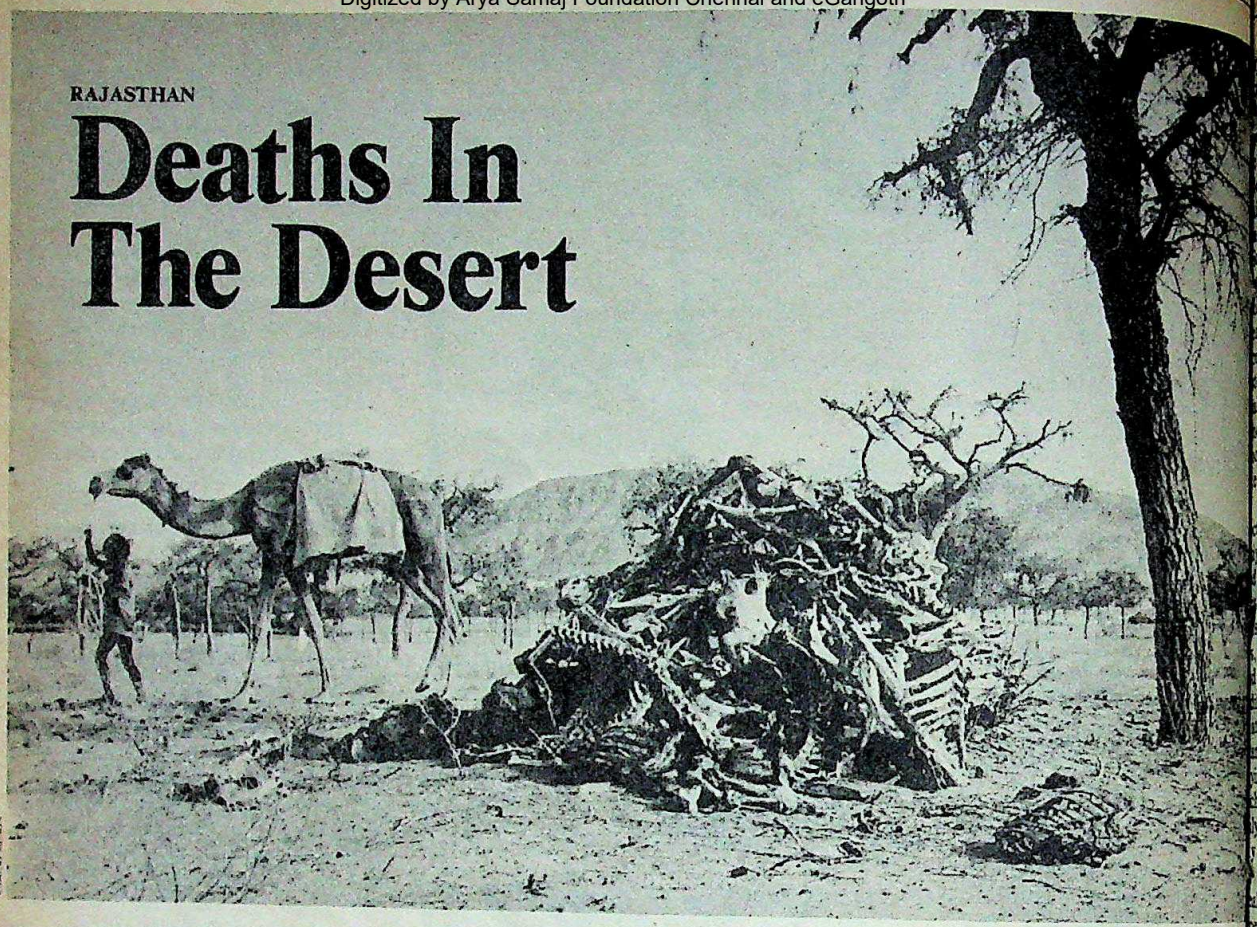
RAJASTHAN

Deaths In The Desert



FOR FIVE agonising years, the sprawling desert belt of western Rajasthan has endured a drought that seems as if it will never end. Last month, alarming reports began trickling in of hundreds of people dead or dying in the remote villages of the state. So far, the Government has stubbornly denied that people have died due to starvation and, last week, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was taken on a day-long tour of some of the drought-hit areas and expressed satisfaction at the progress on the construction of the Rajasthan canal and the "relief work" by the state Government in the drought-hit areas.

Even though local villagers complained to members of her entourage about starvation deaths in many families, it was obvious that the state Government was merely making political capital out of the prime minister's visit. Most of her day was spent in motoring down the banks of the canal where she was proudly shown the progress and the work that was being done. Mrs Gandhi's sympathy for the drought-affected villagers would have been more acute had the state officials taken her to the more remote areas which INDIA TODAY *Correspondent* RAMESH MENON *toured last fortnight.*

Covering a total of 1,500 km in the more inaccessible districts of Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Barmer by tractor, jeep and on foot, Menon discovered that the state and local administration is totally ignorant of the extent of the calamity and the manner in which people are succumbing to disease and death owing to lack of food. It is inconceivable that 35 years after independence, there are thousands of villagers who have not enough food to eat while the Government proudly proclaims foodgrain sufficiency and the success of the green revolution. The truth, as Menon discovered, is tragically different from what the Government would have people believe. His report:

DEATH, it is said, is a great leveller. It spares no one. However, in the drought-hit desert belt of Rajasthan, it is singling out the desperately poor. In the last three months, within a week of succumbing to ailments such as fever, bronchitis, pneumonia and other respiratory diseases, hundreds of debilitated villagers have fallen to the Grim Reaper. Most of them were middle-aged, but five consecutive years of drought had left them susceptible to almost any marauding colony of germs. What is more, they could afford to travel to government medical centres for aid—a round trip often means an exhausting ride by camel or jeep—the only forms of transport—for as much as 4[illegible]

While hundreds of households in Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Bikaner and [illegible] districts are in mourning, the state Government insists that the villagers did not die of sickness brought on by malnutrition. It accepts a figure of only 180 deaths spread in half a dozen villages in four districts. The Government is yet to send medical teams into the desert to scout for the sick. In fact, medical and administration officials have only bothered to go to villages where deaths were reported by *Rajasthan Patrika*, a Jodhpur daily.

Callous Reaction: Rajasthan [illegible] Minister Shiv Charan Mathur, when asked about the situation, remarked: "People die everywhere." His reaction characterises the insensitive attitude of the state Government which is trying to play things down and make it look as if the deaths occurred over many months and were not all that much out of the ordinary. State Health Minister Khet Singh Rathor maintains coolly that he has not

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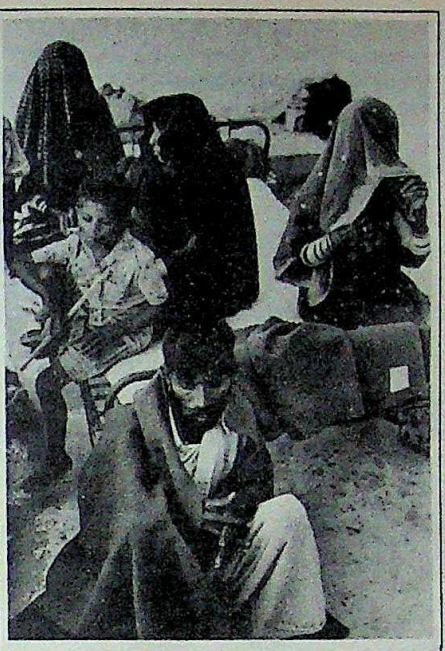
...s of people dying. Health Department ...retary R.J. Majithia says that he is not ...e that people are dying in the desert belt. The authorities' attempts to turn a blind ... to the whole affair are considerably ...ed by the fact that death registers are not ...ntained in the villages and that village ...dmen do not report the deaths to the di... administration. For example, at ...ora village, 30 km from Osiyan town in ...hpur district, over 30 villagers, half of ...m below 45, have died in the last two ...nths of fever and pneumonia. But the re... supposed to be maintained by the local ...lth worker and the teacher at the village ...ool does not mention the deaths. Wails ...m Singh, 40, a farmer: "They are dying ...e never before."

For the sick at Matora, going to a ...ctor is an ordeal: they must travel to ...yan. The bus makes one round trip a day ...d the fare is Rs 7, which most of the villa... cannot afford. As most government dis...saries do not stock the necessary medici..., the patients must buy them privately, ...d this, too, they cannot afford to do. The ...fferent food is no help, either. One ...atora resident, dressed in tattered clothes, ...ndishes a handful of poor quality wheat, ...ing bitterly: "Do you people in cities eat ...h bad wheat? The Government gives us ...ly such wheat which even animals in the ...y would refuse to eat."

Disease Havoc: The story of drought-...akened bodies and merciless poverty is ...eated everywhere. Khojaram ...di, a panchayat member at Pad...la village in Jodhpur district, 60 km ...m Jodhpur town, affirms that the ...odd people who have died in the ... two months—20 were children ...ow seven—were poor and so could ...t take advantage of medical facili...s which are, moreover, 20 km away. ...dasala village has about 3,000 resi...nts and 400 families: bacillary ...sentery, a highly infectious disease ...used by polluted water, is wreaking ...voc at present and many villagers ...e down with fever and are passing ...oody stools. In a hut surrounded by ...nd two feet deep, the gift of a pass...g sandstorm, Depudi, 1, and Memli, ...huddle in a corner. Says their father ...otharam Meghwal, 28: "They are ...tting worse day by day. They have ...en suffering from diarrhoea for ...ree weeks, but I have no money for ...edical treatment."

Osiyan and Phalodi tehsils are the ...st affected areas of Jodhpur district. ...mits a panchayat official at Osiyan: ...here has been an increase in the death rate ...re in the last two months due to disease." ...ks Sevaram Chaudhari, 35, a labourer: "How can you expect us to be healthy? If we are lucky we eat bajra rotis with chillies. Vegetables are consumed only by the rich. Ninety of us from Harlai village have been employed in famine relief projects for a month. We are supposed to be paid every week, but for a month we have not received a paisa. With whom can we fight?"

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



"I have no money to buy medicines. Please ask the doctors to keep giving me free medicines till I recover. I do not want to die."

—RAWTARAM MEGHWAL, 40 TB patient.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

"My sister-in-law and her three sons died in a span of five days. We are all battling with hunger."

—HARARAM BHIL, villager, Solankiya Tala

It is the same litany everywhere. Sakur Khan, 43, of Bhikambor village in Jodhpur district affirms: "If many of us are falling sick and dying it is because we have not eaten decent food for a long time. The luckiest of us eat a maximum of five bajra rotis a day." The rotis are not enough to keep disease at bay. Harlai village is 23 km from Osiyan and has a population of around 1,600. In the last two months, about 20 people have died. Some had fever, others were vomiting blood. The nearest doctor is at Osiyan. Says Chaudhari: "Many of us could not afford a doctor." The story at Palli village, 35 km from Osiyan, is similar. Out of a population of 4,000, 50 have died in the last two months: some had fever, others suffered from stomach ailments.

Healthy Islands: Significantly, well-to-do villages such as Lohawat, also in Osiyan tehsil, have shown no increase in the death rate. The reason is that Lohawat is populated by the Bishnoi and Jat community who are fairly affluent. Most of them make their living by smuggling opium. Suraram Chaudhari, sarpanch of Tapra village in Barmer district, explains simply: "If you have money, you can get treated. Otherwise you will die like the 50-odd poor villagers in Tapra, Kaludi and Jagsa villages of Pachpadra tehsil of Barmer."

Incidentally, Dr S.L. Singhvi, the medical officer at Barmer who visited villages in Chhotan tehsil, agreed that the villagers ate only bajra without vegetables or anything else, but insists that they are all healthy and cannot be called malnourished. Unfortunately, although Singhvi made two trips to various villages, he did not examine any patients as he presumed there were none. A diametrically opposite view comes from Dr Kesrimal Khatri, a Barmer physician: "All along the 150 km border with Pakistan, villagers are suffering from fever, bronchitis and gastro-enteritis caused by consuming *toomba* seeds and *lana* grass, which leads to inflammation of the intestines. Malnutrition caused by five consecutive droughts has considerably weakened the resistance of the villagers."

Villages which have a doctor or medical facilities close by have not suffered. Ramdeora, about 12 km from Pokharan in Jaisalmer district, has a small hospital with a full-time doctor and the health situation here is generally good, although Pokharan tehsil is one of the worst affected by drought. The Government has also taken care to highlight cases whe...

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lessness cost lives. In Pokharan tehsil, seven of Amdeen Haji's 13 children died in 10 days, of bronchitis and dysentery. Haji was a well-to-do farmer who could easily have afforded to transport his children 20 km to Pokharan town. However, government officials also take care not to highlight the cases where the people were too poor to look for medical succour tens of kilometres away, as in Solankiya Tala.

SOLANKIYA Tala village in Jodhpur district with a population of over 7,000, is a study in government bungling . It is part of Shergarh constituency, represented by Health Minister Rathor in the Assembly. The village sprawls over 23 km, and in many cases one house is 8 km away from another. The nearest medical aid centre is about 10 km from one end of the village: this means that a patient from the other end has to travel around 60 km—on camel back or by tractor, because even jeeps get stuck in the sand.

From January until mid-April, 75 villagers had died of minor ailments. Soon after the Jodhpur Collector, S.D. Srivastav, admitted that 55 villagers had died by March 16, Rathor said that only 25 had died. By this time, the newspapers had got hold of the story and Sarpanch Narpat Singh produced a list of the dead. The Government then explained that the 75 had died in a period of seven months beginning October 1982. However, enquiries revealed that only three had died between October 1982 and December 1982.

The Government hastily set up a free medical camp in Solankiya Tala. The true extent of the rot became evident when, between March 11 and March 31, as many as 1,469 patients were treated. Many living at great distances from the camp could not take advantage of the free clinic. And although it vociferously maintained that Solankiya Tala's residents were not starving, the Government rushed 1,000 kg of wheat to be distributed to the affected families. The Red Cross also despatched relief supplies. Two famine relief projects were started, employing 625 villagers, although a government official admits that "many of them do not have the energy to work on relief projects". About 350 villagers were also receiving a dole of Rs 1.50 a day.

Uncertain Figures: No one, however, is quite sure of how many people have actually died at Solankiya Tala. Said Shrenidan Bhoopavat, the patwari: "Even we do not know how many have died here in the last two months. In the remote areas of the village, the dead are cremated in the fields and no one ever gets to know about it." The causes of death are uncertain. No post-mortems were done; as a medical officer says, "We did not think it necessary to perform post... tems." The first medical team reached S... kiya Tala in mid-March after 60 people... died, and listed most deaths as due to r... ratory infection.

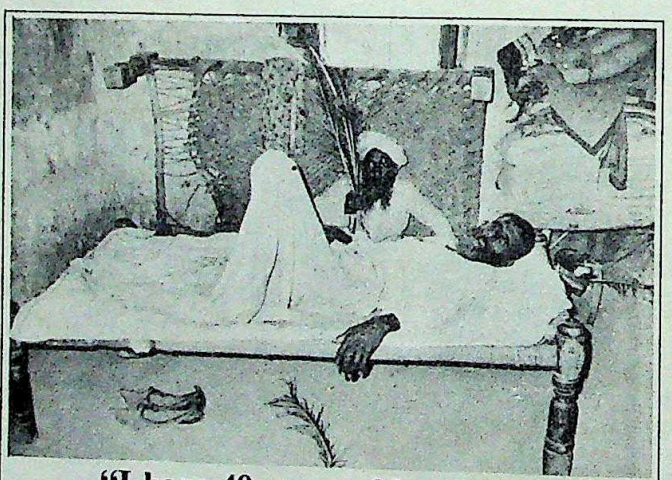
The various government doctors... went to the village all have differing... although none of them... tions the rampant malnutr... in the area. Said Dr ... Krishna Lohra, chief ... cal health officer at Jodh... "It is just a coincidence th... many villagers died in S... kiya Tala. The media is... trying to blow it up and ma... seem like malnutrition and... rvation deaths."

A district administra... team said that the deaths... due to prolonged fever, b... cho-pneumonia and mal... Two other government te... left out the malaria. A ... composed of seven do... from Delhi, Pune, Jodhpur... Jaipur, which visited Solan... Tala last fortnight, blamed... heavily polluted water. Ra... is trying to sell the view thi... respiratory diseases ... caused by the cold weather... says with astonishing can... "If the villagers in Solan... Tala died, they are to bl... They did not bother to v... free government doctor."

The Government's e... at medical aid do not see... have impressed the villa... Pleads Rawtaram Meghwal... who is suffering from tube... losis: "I have no money to ... medicines. Please ask the ... tors to give me free medic... until I recover. I do not wa... die." Perhaps the tragedy... epitomises Solankiya Tala's... tuation, indeed, western R... than's situation, is that... Hanumandas. He died ... month after a bout of fever... dark corner of his tumble... hut sit his widow Jamuden... her four children; she re... how even on the day Hanu... das died, food had to be b... wed from a neighbour. ... 70-year-old father Bhurdas adds that... could not be taken to a doctor as they ha... money. Said he: "Even his last rites were... formed only after we went around asking... money."

Stricken Villages: About 50 km ... Pokharan, where India conducted its ...

"Eight of my cows died in the last two months. There is very little to eat. Now, I am fighting to stay alive."
—KISHAN SINGH, 49, a patient.



"I have 40 acres of land lying bare since five years. Now, I'm a pauper with no medicine."
—UTTAM SINGH, 52, seriously afflicted with jaundice.

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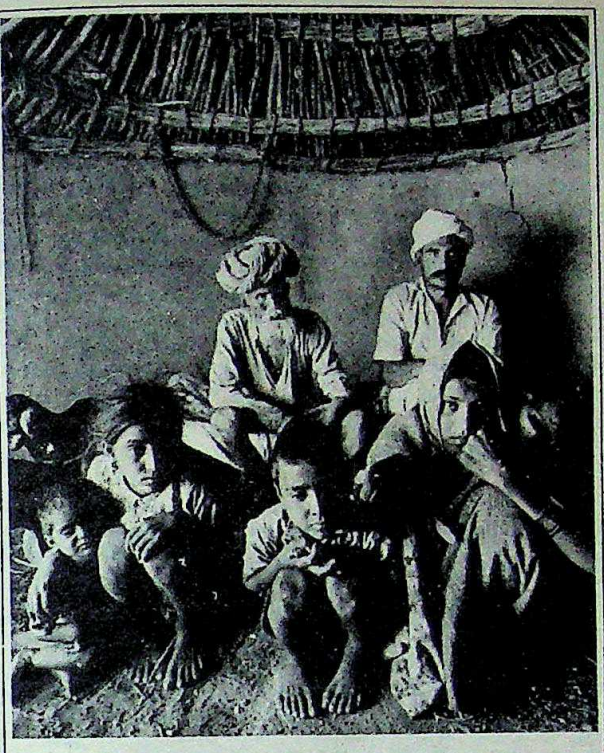

"Even the last rites of my son, Hanumandas could be done only after we went around asking for money."
—BHURDAS, 70.

"Even we do not know how many villagers have died in the last two months. In the remote areas of the village, the dead are cremated in the fields and no one gets to know about it."
—SHRENIDAN BHOOPAVAT, patwari, Solankiya Tala.

drought affected—is getting bleaker and bleaker. Nothing symbolises this existence as well as the daily grind of families in Khara village in Phalodi tehsil in Jodhpur district. This village of over 3,000 people is 28 km from Phalodi town and has absolutely no supply of drinking water. Camel carts laden with brass and earthen pots leave Khara early in the morning for Phalodi, rest there the night, and return early the next morning for Khara. Day after day after day.

Corruption: If the barrenness of their existence is not enough, the few people who have managed to get work at famine relief projects are victims of injustice. Most of them are not paid the statutory minimum daily wage of Rs 7. Complains Rawat Singh, 35, of Baleshwar village in Shergarh tehsil: "We are asked to sign for Rs 7, but are paid only Rs 4." Pabuda Charan, 20, of Dhandhaniya village says helplessly: "If we protest, they will remove us from the relief work and we will die of hunger. Anyway, Rs 4 is a lot of money."

State Relief Minister Hanuman Prabhakar refutes charges that famine relief projects are riddled with corruption. Says he: "It is not possible and no cases of corruption have been brought to my notice." The politics of relief is evident. Shergarh, which has a block of 37 villages with a population of 70,000, 2,500 villagers have got jobs. In the neighbouring Baleshwar block, which has 54 villages and a population of 80,000, only 1,000 labourers have secured jobs. Baleshwar villagers are bitter because they feel that Shergarh was given more attention as the head of its panchayat samiti is Kalyan Singh, nephew of Health Minister Rathor.

There are indications that the mills of the Government are, at long last, moving. The Health Department has decided to start five mobile pathological-cum-clinical units in the affected areas. The state Government is also planning to appoint village health guides by the end of May; these will be trained to administer basic medicines. The belated measures might go some way towards salving the state Government's conscience, but for most of the sick and despairing residents of Rajasthan's sandy belt, they will have come too late.

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LIGHT TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT

Stalled Flight

IF THE *Guinness Book Of Records* ever introduces a section on bureaucratic decision-making, there would be more record-holders in South Block than in the Patiala sports institute. But even by Indian snail-paced standards, one of the favourite contenders for the title of the longest decision-making process must surely be the succession of officials who have been agonising over the proposal to purchase a light transport aircraft (LTA) ever since 1974.

Not surprisingly, by last fortnight, the current LTA committee had made what must be considered major progress by whittling down the original array of contenders to three and were reportedly, in the words of a committee member, "just one or two meetings away from a final decision". But judging by the manner in which the final decision has dragged on interminably, that could mean anything between next week and next year. In fact, even as the Government was claiming that a decision is imminent, two more aircraft manufacturers hove into view over the horizon with their gift-wrapped packages to try and convince Vayudoot, the country's floundering third-level regional air service, that what they were offering would better suit its needs. The presentation of the two offers could not have been more contrasting and yet symbolises the tortuous twists and belly-rolls that the LTA decision has undergone right from its initial stages.

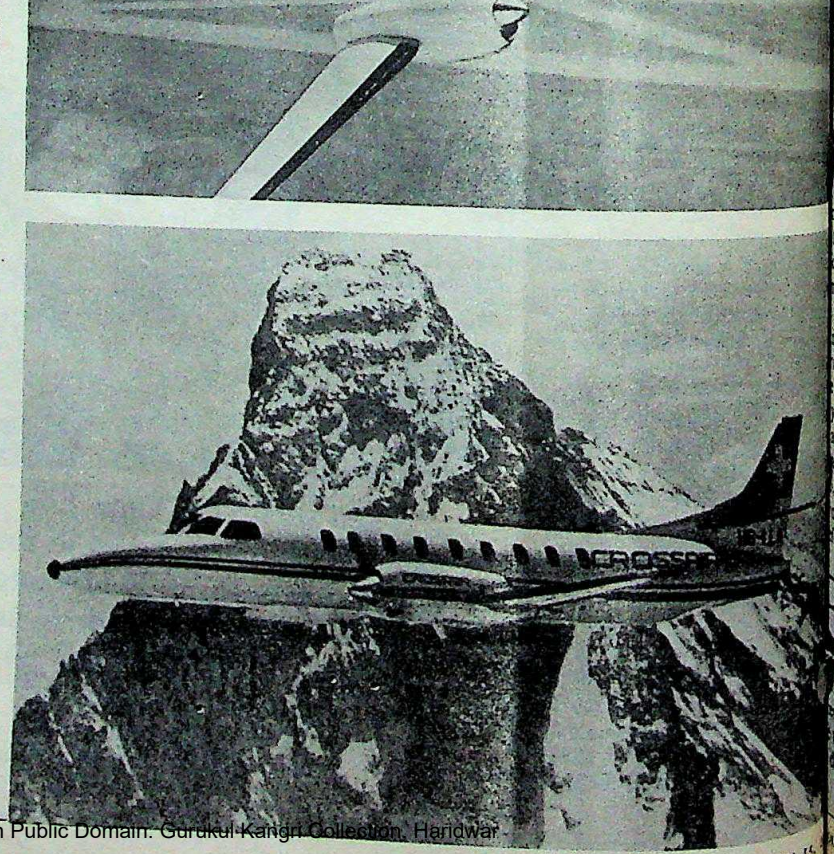
High-powered Selling: The first offer is for the Saab-Fairchild 340, the product of a collaboration between the Swedish company, Saab-Scania and Fairchild Industries of America. Saab-Fairchild did it in style. A luncheon press conference at a five-star hotel where glossy brochures and give-aways were reverently handed out, a demonstration of the aircraft for the prospective customer and a high-level delegation headed by the company's senior vice-president.

The other offer was, by contrast, almost a casual afterthought. An Indian aircraft dealer called Mr Mahajan, based in the Bahamas, strolled into the offices of Vayudoot General Manager Captain B.K. Bhasin dressed in chappals, T-shirt and jeans and casually inquired whether he would be interested in the Metro-3, a fast-selling commuter aircraft. Both aircraft are, at the moment, highly unsuitable for Vayudoot. Saab-Fairchild is a 35-seat pressurised aircraft that costs somewhere in the region of Rs 8 crore while the Metro-3's performance and price-tag is hardly compatible with the three aircraft that have been short-listed by the LTA committee which is essentially looking for a 19- to 20-seat unpressurised aircraft for its four customers, Vayudoot, the Indian Air Force (IAF), the Coast Guard and the navy.

The three aircraft in the running—the West German Dornier 228, the Canadian Twin Otter and the Spanish Casa C-212—have comparable seat capacities and price-tags of just under Rs 2 crore. With the aviation business being as fiercely competitive as it is, Saab-Fairchild and Metro-3 were obviously aware that a final decision was around the corner and yet the fact that still put in their bids is more than indicative of their confidence that the LTA decision vulnerable to last-minute changes.

Committee Conundrum: Already decision has dragged on for nine years no less than four expert committees after original Ministry of Defence committee headed by scientist V.R. Sinha, first met 1974 to examine the feasibility aspects Sinha Committee's report projected demand for between 150 and 300 aircraft and also concurred on the key requirement —that Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) was capable of undertaking indigenous production of the aircraft selected

The Saab-Fairchild (below) and (bottom) the Metro: surprise entrants



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...1978, the Gidwani Committee, headed ...director-general of civil aviation B.S. ...gani, examined 11 aircraft and recom... ...three—the same three that are being ...dered now in 1983, the Dornier, the ...and the Twin Otter.

But, in typical bureaucratic tradition, ...mittees bred faster than rabbits. No ...r had the Gidwani Committee submit... ...report than another committee, under ...Marshal J. Zaheer was set up in Decem... ...1979 to examine the Gidwani Commit... ...report and recommend two aircraft. ...aircraft recommended were the Twin ...and the Australian Nomad. Barely a ...later, yet another committee called the ...mma Committee was formed and the ...exercise repeated with the ...decision still no closer than ...the proposal was first ...ted.

Aircraft List: Neither was ...committee-breeding process ... With the Zaheer Commit... ...report still fresh from the ...ing presses, yet another ...mittee called the Menon ...mittee was born which ...-listed 10 aircraft and in... ...on three requirements— ...t take-off and landing ...) capability, turbo-prop ...twin-engined aircraft and ...operating costs. Of the 10, ...types appeared to be ahead ...pack—Dornier and Twin ...er.

Strangely enough, though ...Menon Committee report ...remains the basic working ...r, the Twin Otter has not so ...been invited for demonstra... ...Even stranger is the fact ...though the Casa C-212 has ...been rejected by separate ...mittees, it still remains in ... running, even though its ...-ramp loading system is ...ly suitable for an operator ... Vayudoot. The fact that ...yudoot only requires around ...aircraft, or 15 per cent of the ... requirement of around ... is the main argument in ...our of the Casa which is only ...ered by the IAF.

BUT THE fact remains ...that it is Vayudoot which ...has suffered the most be... ...of the delay in the deci... Apart from the fact that its ...er and seat/kilometre costs ...the lowest in the world, and ...deliberate political design, its mounting losses are largely because of the uneconomical fleet of ageing Avros and Fokkers which are 44-seat aircraft flying half empty on most of its routes. The other factor is, of course, the fact that a two-year delay in decision-making can push up original estimates by as much as 50 per cent.

The only aspect in favour is that the aircraft industry is running through rough financial weather and it is currently a buyers' market. But that may not last too long. Already, both Casa and Dornier have submitted revised estimates and if the delay extends any further the original total estimate of Rs 400 crore may go haywire.

Delayed Decision: Vayudoot's Bhasin insists that the delay is because the manufacturers keep altering their estimates but admits: "Even with brand new aircraft, we will continue to make a loss unless the fare structure is revised." The fact that Vayudoot's initial requirement is only for seven or eight aircraft in a fly-away condition would imply that the stalling tactics are being employed by the IAF and the navy, who have larger requirements. The navy's requirement is essentially for maritime reconnaissance for which the Twin Otter and the Dornier are eminently suitable.

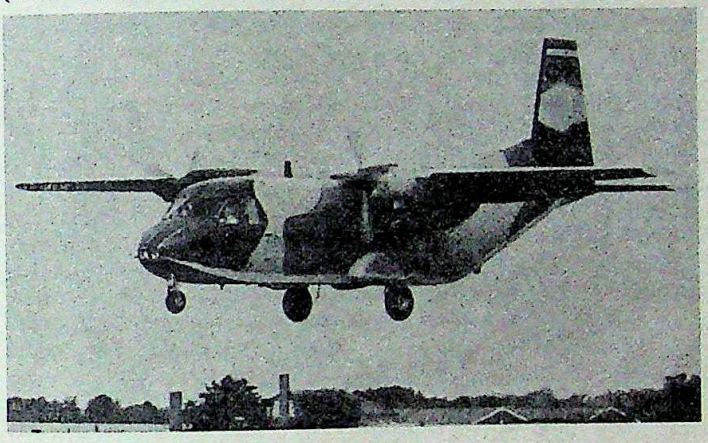
The Twin Otter has been around for almost two decades and has proved itself as a dependable workhorse. The Dornier, which is a newer design, also conducted successful maritime patrols during its demonstration flights in India. But with the IAF still stubbornly plugging for the Casa, the final decision could have no bearing on proven performances. As a senior Indian Airlines official who sat on one of the committees admits: "There are a lot of pressures from various directions."

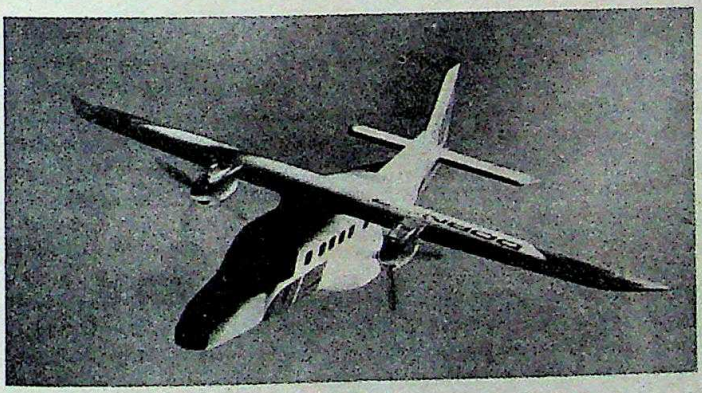
Growing Pressures: But even with the "pressures", it is hardly conceivable how a high-level committee like the present one, responsible for the final decision, manages to take so long to decide on a suitable aircraft. Apart from representatives of the four operators, the committee consists of Defence Secretary P.K. Kaul, Secretary for Defence Production, M.C. Sarin, Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence Dr V.S. Arunachalam and HAL chief Air Marshal L.M. Katre. Added to this is the fact that the project has been shrouded in unnatural secrecy from the time it started.

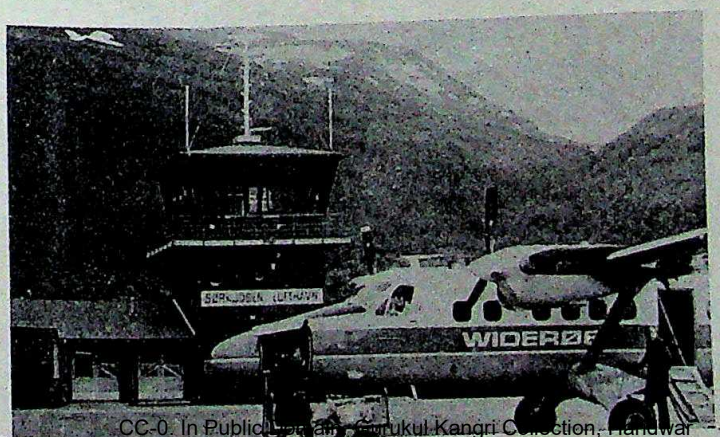
What makes matters worse is that all four operators are urgently in need of new aircraft. Vayudoot is in desperate financial straits, the navy's reconnaissance patrols are necessarily limited by its ancient Islanders, the IAF has already grounded its Devons and the Coast Guard is without any aircraft of its own. As the entry of Saab-Fairchild and Metro into the race has proved, any further delay will only be a signal for more manufacturers to converge on New Delhi and further confuse what is already a highly confusing scenario.

—DILIP BOBB

(From below) the Casa-212; the Dornier and the Twin Otter: short-listed







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A motorcycle team get a push from local villagers: good organisation

SAFARI RALLY

A Pioneering Effort

SEVENTY-NINE years after they initiated the first ever Indian car rally, pioneers Automobile Association of Eastern India (AAEI), successfully organised the first national safari rally last fortnight. Flagged off by M.K. Belgamvala, president of the Federation of Indian Automobile Associations, and Dipak Rudra, transport commissioner, 22 motorcycles and 13 cars sped noisily out of Calcutta on April 16 on a gruelling circuit that stretched over some 1,780 km.

Urged on by enthusiastic crowds, who, unaware of the difference between a rally and a race, cheered the leaders and booed the stragglers, the rallyists cut through the three states of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in the first, 525 km-long, highway sector of the rally. Passing through Boharagora, Bangriposi, Joshipur, Tiring, Hata and Jamshedpur, all competitors, barring one motorcycle which met with an accident near Jamshedpur, reached Ranchi.

At 4 on April 17 morning, barely two hours after completing the first lap, the jungle sector of the rally commenced. Intended to be an elimination round, the 400 km-long second lap covered the forests of the Chhotanagpur range, passing through Chandwa, Latehar, Sarju, Banari, Rudh, Betla to terminate again at Ranchi. By the time they returned to Ranchi for a well deserved rest, the exhausted competitors had fore unbridged rivers, dodged through littered roads and endured incessa While all the 13 cars came through original 22 motorcyclists only 18 rema the fray.

Endurance Test: The test of the rance skills of the survivors continue the third 'virtually roadless' sector which they were flagged at 4 am on A This lap covered roughly 330 km and through the Chandwa, Chatra, K sandhi, Bahimar, Rajderwa and Hazar national forests, as also the Ramgar and ended again at Ranchi. As they hed through 16 river and sand beds. vers were required to make 51 speed cl driving at such low average as 57.94 kmph, 55.23 kmph or 48.38

The second and third sectors also the organisers severely. Speeds had kept low because the weathermen pred rain. Doctors had to follow the partic along the entire route in relief jeep trucks, and local villagers had to be hi to push the vehicles that got bogged do the sand and slush. The movements rally teams were monitored by army wi and police and forest officials spent sleepless nights for the success of the

By comparison, the concluding way lap back to Calcutta, which began hardly any halt at Ranchi, passed eventfully. Said a car rallyist: "Afte gruelling road conditions in the secon third sectors, I felt as if I was travelling imported limousine." Seventeen cycles and 13 cars crossed the finishing the early hours of April 19. For the first the sweepstakes for both the two- and wheeler categories were the same: first Rs 15,000; second prize Rs 7,500; and prize Rs 3,500. Said Ashish Roy, who the motorcycle category: "It was one best combinations of roads I've seen." ed the victorious motor car rallyist, P Sadhan Bose, who has 15 years of ra experience behind him: "The manag was excellent; so was the choice of ro

The organisers along with co-sp Dunlop India had succeeded in closel proximating the road conditions to model they based themselves on: the Ke East African Safari Rally, which is the popular annual rallying event in the w Said an enthusiastic Kalyan Bhadra, sec ry-general of the AAEI: "We are encou because all the competitors admitted was a true safari. Our competitors are the best. They have gained safari exper and with proper assistance and support can participate in international safari too." The AAEI is now working towa next project: an ambitious rally from Ca ta to Beijing.

—ABHIJIT DAS G

Car drivers negotiate a dirt track: endurance test

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TRIMONY

emon Aid

THE LATEST line in marriage bureaus is an old temple in Tamil Nadu, with an unusual advertising blurb in form of a plaque which says: "Goddess akshi did *tapasya* here and as a result married to Lord Ekambareswar.... therefore, any unmarried girl who comes offers vows to Goddess Kamakshi will get married. This is a known fact in this

Situated 20 km away from Madras, at ngadu, is the temple of Kamakshi where rimony is as easy as buying lemons. In that is precisely what it is. "Offer me just lemons a week for six weeks and you have the man of your desire as a life ner," say the temple authorities.

Whether it is faith or superstition, the temple has, over the years, become the solace for thousands of disillusioned and their parents, persecuted by unjust cial customs. Every Monday, Friday and day the temple assumes a special significe as Goddess Kamakshi listens to the nest prayers of unwed girls.

For hours the girls wait in long queues, clutching baskets containing coconuts, flowers and of course, the two lemons. In remembrance of the goddess who went through the same procedure before tying the holy knot, they offer the two lemons to the priest and get one back to be taken home and worshipped for the next one week. The ritual is repeated over the next five weeks and in the last week a pail of cow's milk is added to the offering which is later distributed among the other devotees. With this the maiden's *tapasya* ends. She can now go back home and wait for her long-awaited mate to turn up and ask for her hand.

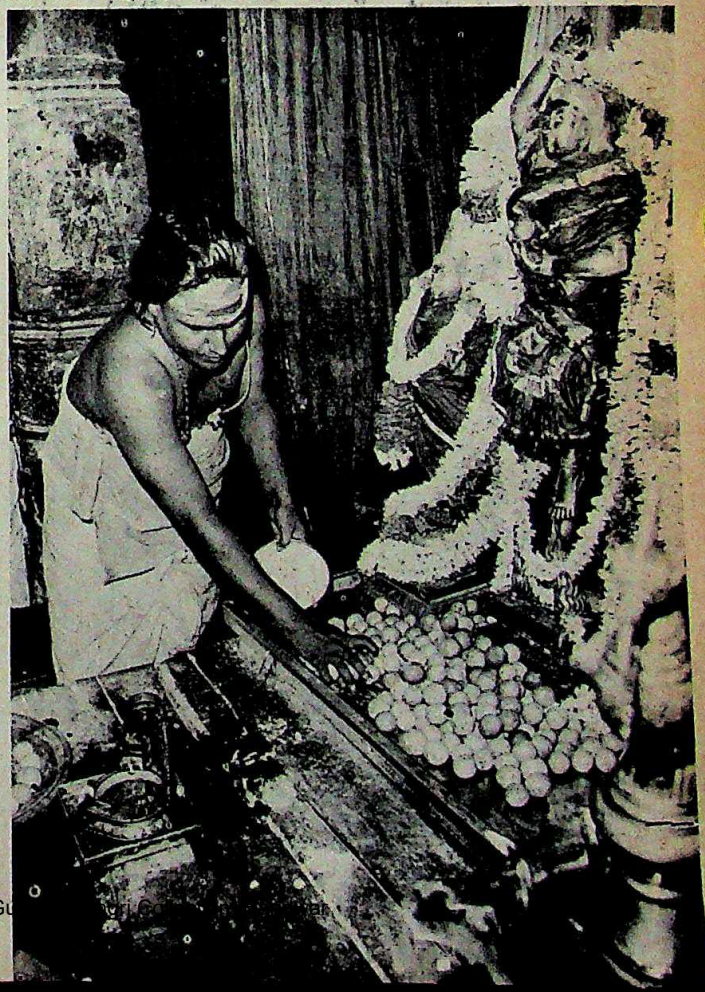
Satisfied Devotees: Does he really come? Petite Gajalakshmi, a worshipper at the temple, answers in the affirmative. Her father, who has spent sleepless nights because of his unwed daughter, also agrees and feels sure that his worries are over. "Somehow I now feel that her marriage will soon take place," he says. "I know of girls and parents who have come here and worshipped Kamakshi and found a suitable boy...I'm sure my daughter will be blessed too." As if in assurance, the Chief Priest Kasisama Gurkkal adds: "This lemon blessed by the Goddess is Shakthi incarnate. It is power...sheer power....How can any demand be ignored with this power in your hand?"

Why, then, did this temple of Kamakshi, believed to be centuries old, not become popular till 1976? Pat comes the priest's answer: "Like us mortals in this world, subjected to various influences of the stars we were born under and forced to face ups and downs. Similarly the gods aren't different. They also go through adverse periods. Goddess Kamakshi too went through such a period. In 1972 when Kanchi Sankaracharya came and did *puja* here, the Goddess came out in all her splendour and since then her blessings are felt here."

The blessings have not been restricted to unwed females alone. The revenue of the temple has gone up from a mere Rs 80,000 in 1976 to Rs 18 lakh in 1983. The little shops in Mangadu selling lemons and coconuts are doing a booming business with a devotee traffic of almost half a million. And with husband-seeking becoming such a difficult proposition, even Muslims and Christians, clutching their lemons, are now part of the thronging crowds. Before long the temple will have its own *Kalyan Mantap* or the marriage hall. "Mangadu" in Tamil means "a forest of mango tress". Why not, then, a mango for a husband instead of a lemon? The answer is simple. Lemons are available throughout the year.

—RAGHAVENDRA RAO

Prospective brides with lemons (left); the temple priest returning the blessed fruit



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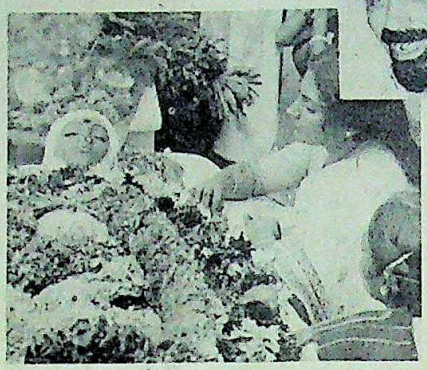
KERALA

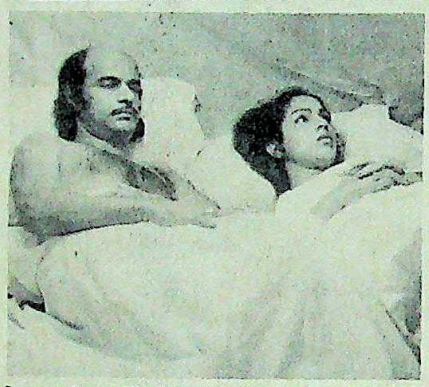
Imitation Of Life?

IT COULD be, in the complete sense of the phrase, a case of art imitating life. Even before the first scenes of Malayalam film director K.G. George's *Lekhayude Maranam—Oru Flashback* (Lekha's Death—A Flashback) have flickered on theatre screens, the film has already caused considerable tumult. As well it might: *Flashback* tells the story of the rise to stardom of an actress in a corrupt film industry, her scandalous affair with a married man, and her suicide. The plot seems to parallel the story of the late Urvasi Award-winning actress Shoba, her affair with cameraman-director Balu Mahendra whom she married and her mysterious and untimely suicide. The parallel is so uncomfortably close that Shoba's mother Prema has vowed to sue director George for defamation.

Flashback is a hard-hitting indictment of the life and mores of Kodambakkam, the bustling film city near Madras. George, who won an award for his *Yavanika* (Curtain) last year, has pulled no punches. The opening shot sets the atmosphere: an Indian News Review black-and-white clip of the funeral procession of Urvasi Award-winning actress Lekha, with the commentator saying that Lekha's suicide has shocked the entire Madras film industry. There are huge crowds and several stars play themselves paying homage to Lekha. After the news review ends the film shifts to colour and the story proper begins as a flashback.

Cover Story: The plot is quite simple. Visalekshmi, played by Shubha, wants to make daughter Lekha, played by Malini, a star. From a village in Kerala they come to Kodambakkam. However, the director who had assured them that he would give Lekha a break goes back on his word. Visalekshmi vows to make her daughter a star; her husband wants to go back to the village. In the end, the mother has her way.





Scenes from *Flashback*: Mother Visalekshmi watches over Lekha's body (top); Lekha and her lover Suresh Babu; (inset) Director George

By and by, mother and daughter fall into the hands of an assistant director and a powerful film journalist. Producers tell Lekha they will give her roles only if she sleeps with them. Meanwhile, the assistant director, pretending to be in love with her, takes her to bed and later presents her to a producer who has promised him his first film as director.

This episode is a watershed in Lekha's life. Her drunk father deserts the family and only her mother's iron will and determination stop Lekha from ... ning back to Kerala. A ... ful pimp, Ramaiah—... superbly by Tamil stage ... dian C. Sreenivasan—... them over. Then her ... changes; after a visit ... Karumari Amman ... which is a favourite ... film crowd, she becomes a top star ... ageing superstar of the industry, Prem ... played by Mamutti, signs eight films ... her. Her mother makes her work day ... night. Her father returns with a ... relatives who start living off her.

The rest of the film shows ... developing relationship with Suresh ... played by Gopi, the cameraman-... and art film maker, who is married and ... son. At the pinnacle of her career, after ... wins the Urvasi Award for her perform... in one of Babu's films, she elopes with ... Visalekshmi has hysterics and confi... her daughter in heavy, melodramatic ... nes. Babu's wife and son blackmail ... emotionally. Finally, Babu breaks off ... Lekha who commits suicide.

The outstanding performance in *Fl... back* comes from Shubha as Visalekh... Lekha's shrewd, avaricious and ruthless ... ther. Stage actor Tilaman is excellent ... journalist who puts Lekha on the ro... superstardom. Mamutti, the current ra... the Malayalam screen, successfully ape... mannerisms of fellow actor Prem Nazir ... Prem Sagar role. The camera wor... excellent.

Controversy: But the story is wha... made people sit up and take notice. Ge... vehemently denies that the film has any... to do with Shoba or her mother Prema ... says that he has based *Flashback* on the ... cide syndrome in the industry; accordi... him, four top actresses including Shoba ... committed suicide in the last five years. ... George: "It is a dog-eats-dog industry, fi... whores and pimps." He also denies tha... made the film in consultation with ... Mahendra, as alleged by Shoba's mo... who, for her part, is extremely upset. ... she: "K.G. George's film has dep... me as a prostitute and I will take legal a... against the release of the film."

Mahendra himself was very reluctan... talk—he says he has not seen the film ... asserted that he had nothing to do ... *Flashback* and had not discussed the ... with George. Said he: "All these ru... started because when George was sho... in Ooty for the film, I was also there. ... as the charges and counter-charges fly ... and forth, *Flashback* has already rece... the pre-release publicity George coul... hoped for, and looks all set to be a ... success.

—SREEDHAR ...

Shoba's body, discovered in May 1981: mysterious death

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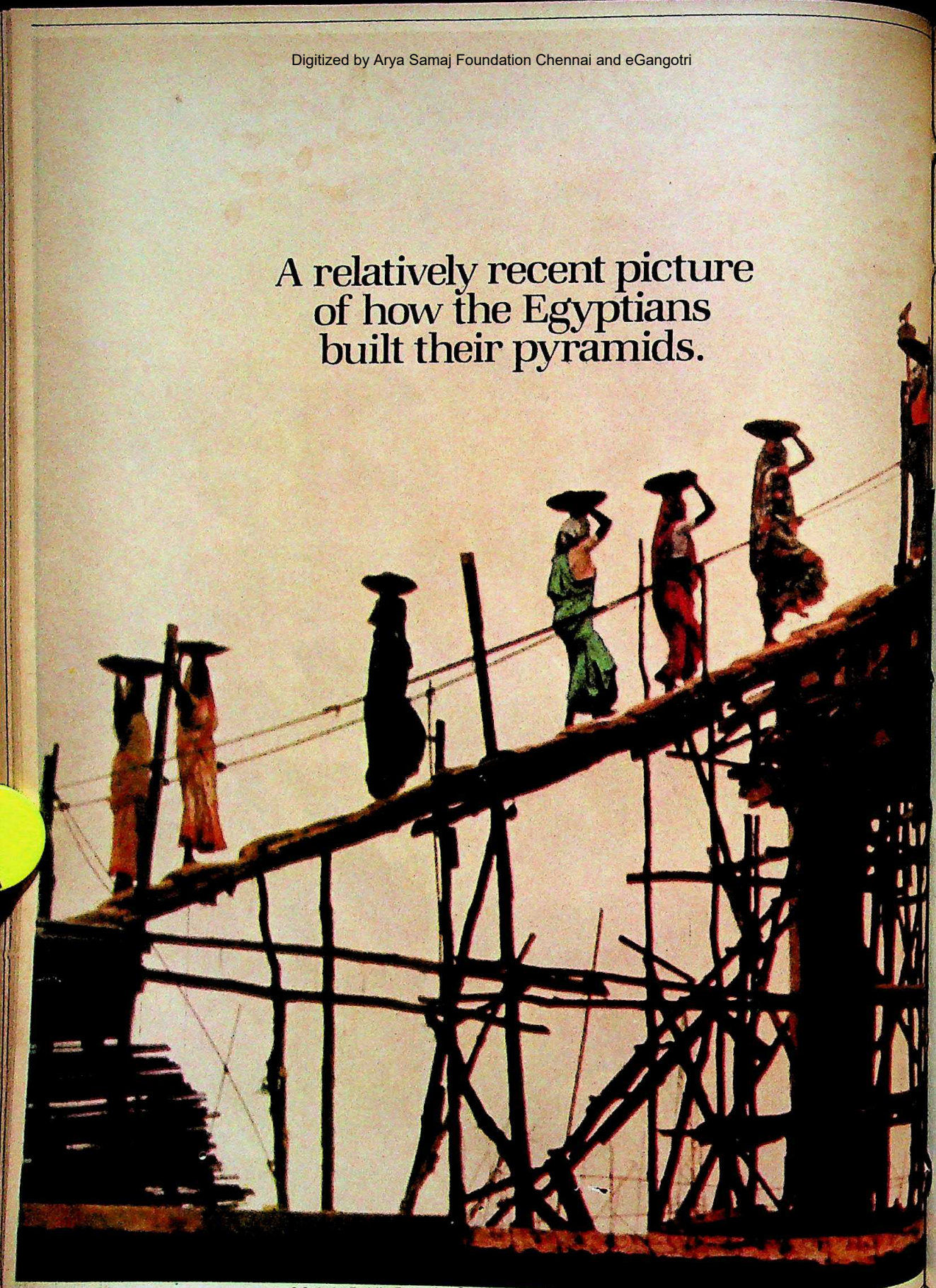
A relatively recent picture of how the Egyptians built their pyramids.



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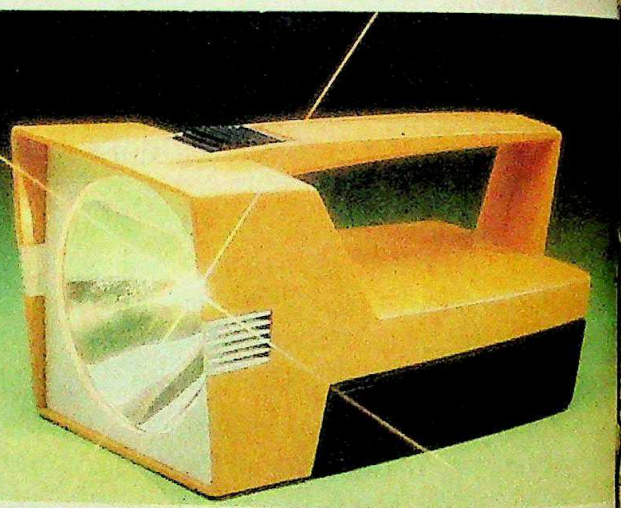
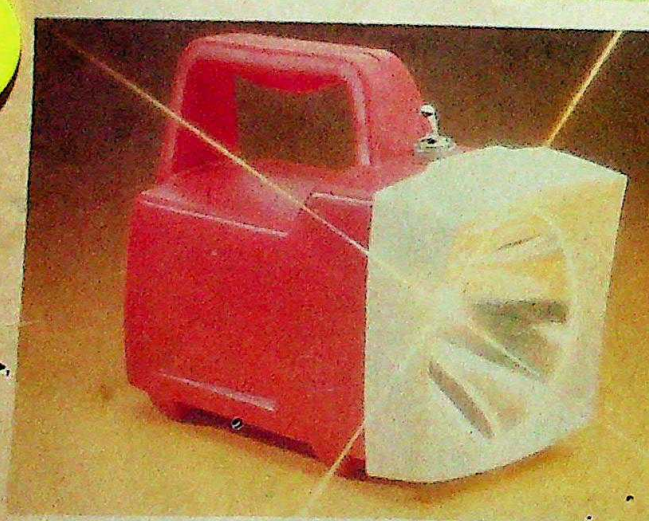
EVEREADY COMET
The space age lantern





EVEREADY COMMANDER
A beam so bright, it can match a car headlight

EVEREADY UNION CARBIDE

Eveready Lanterns. The long-light brigade

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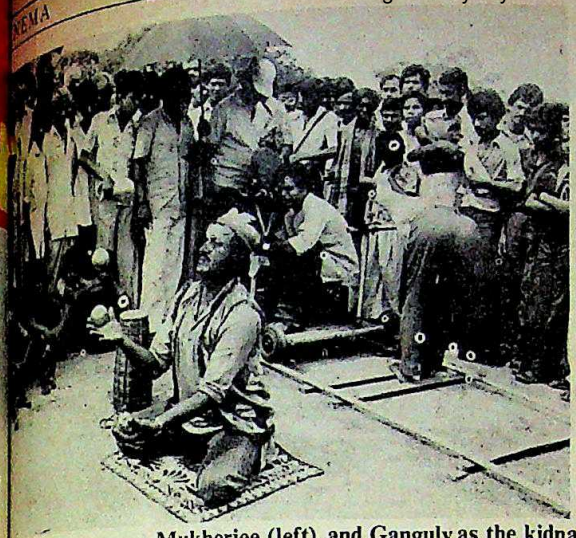

Mukherjee (left) and Ganguly as the kidnapped child in *Phatikchand*: amateurish effort

Unimpressive Debut

ATIKCHAND
Rajiv Ganguly, Kamu Mukherjee, ndhan Banerjee.
ght and Score: Satyajit Ray
ction: Sandip Ray

HAD TALENT for film making been as hereditary as the right to lead the Congress(I) Party, Sandip Ray, 31, ntary film maker Satyajit Ray's apprenson, would have had no reason to look after the recent release of his maiden *Phatikchand*. His father wrote the , the script and the score for his film. gently not satisfied, he allowed his e crew to collaborate with his son, and eeks later, when the film was about to at the box-office, gave it a shot in the by allowing it a double-billing. *Piku*, two-reeler made for French television, ow being screened along with *Phatik*d in some theatres. Still, no takers.

The ways of the viewers are, at least in ase, not so inscrutable. This is not an ellectual" film, so there is no reason why ommon audiences should feel alienated. it is a technically pretentious work, emoric in handling and conceptualiand, in the end, resembling the efforts raduate students in film institutes. The that the film has received rave reviews in Calcutta press is only a mark of the cult that Ray—and now the Rays, it seems oy in Bengal.

Phatikchand is based on what might been an interesting story: a rich man's is kidnapped, but the kidnappers are get in an accident and lose him. The boy suffers a loss of memory and is given shelter by a roving juggler, with whom he develops an empathy. In the end, when he regains his memory, he returns home but is hurt by his father's arrogance to the juggler, whose bohemian ways now deeply attract him.

Lifeless Entertainment: This bare outline of course had enormous possibilities of exploring social details. And Ray, as scriptwriter, did not let go of this opportunity, filling his script with a wealth of detail of speech habits, attitudes and situations. The script has a good deal of potential for entertainment, such as a chase sequence down the twisted slum alleys and another at the maidans which are swept by a nor'wester.

Sandip Ray picks up these components and sews them together in a lifeless format that has neither the intended social observation of the script nor the crispness of a thriller. There are vignettes of life in Calcutta, and there are well-cut sequences showing the city's throbbing life in the open. But things do not gell, and the bits hang together like unrelated cameos.

Much of the blame should, nevertheless, go to the cast, specially Rajiv Ganguly, who plays the child and does little beside looking as pretty as a dew-washed lily. His amnesia and his subsequent restoration of memory, for example, are not reinforced by any subtle changes in the tempo of acting, a lapse for which the director should bear the primary responsibility. Even Kamu Mukherjee, who plays the juggler, is like some of the more stereotyped, and less memorable, Satyajit Ray characters—wonderfully amiable and full of synthetic goodness.

Untapped Potential: In the script, however, situations clearly overshadow the characters. Yet none of the situations are properly developed. The first chase in the slums insults common logic as it shows the streets completely deserted—very unlikely for a city where 31,000 people live in every square kilometre. Moreover, the sequence is a bit too long and refuses to stimulate the viewer. The final chase in the maidans, despite its painstaking evocation of the life around, lacks dramatic cohesiveness. The gangster whips out a knife, and the juggler deals him a karate blow while crowds mill all around. Still, the film is loaded with clever tricks, such as the use of opticals when the boy regains memory during a taxi-ride in a rain-soaked evening. Earlier, when a passing truck smashes the kidnappers' car, killing two of the gang, the tiny transistor radio carried by one of them continues playing a popular film song as the survivors struggle out of the debris.

The clever passages somehow do not join up to make the film either a memorable entertainer or a thriller with a social message, such as Kurosawa's *High and Low*. The director's confusion shows in the film, raising doubts whether he really thought over the characters and the situations in the script, or whether he followed it as blindly as a devout would follow the scriptures. It would clearly have been more rewarding for a second-generation film maker to start out on his own and look for attitudes that are not borrowed. Such originality would not necessarily have been impossible to attain even while filming his father's script.

But Ray Junior has relegated himself to the status of an obedient technician choosing not to splash a dad of colour anywhere on his father's elaborately drawn sketch. The result is a reasonably well-photographed, grammatically correct film. But, that's about all that can be said.

—SUMIT MITRA

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POLITICAL FILMS

Finding A Voice

POLITICAL cinema, like the new wave of the mid-'70s, has long acquired a pejorative meaning in India. At most, a political film that catches the public eye is built around a social theme that fits in with the Government's meandering philosophy. A 'successful' political film also usually turns out to be feature-length, in colour, and replete with enough oblique gimmickry to assure it an urban theatre circuit run that will help its maker recover his costs.

Simultaneously, however, a tiny 'alternative' cinema has been trying to survive within this commercial milieu. Shot in 16mm with extremely rudimentary equipment, made on budgets that would make a shoe-string look positively glamorous, these films have to constantly battle censorship laws, taxation and a myopic bureaucracy. Each of these films focuses essentially on the human condition and makes a strong statement about the injustice, feudalism and disregard for fundamental rights in various parts of the country. As such the very act of exhibiting these films is rendered political.

Bungling Bureaucracy: Recently, Anand Patwardhan's film *A Time to Rise* was subjected to a crass display of the Government's myopic attitude. Initially selected for the Indian Panorama section of the Ninth International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in January it was not listed under any category at all. Patwardhan was informed that the film would be shown in a 'special' 16mm theatre at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. On the penultimate day of the festival, it was finally announced that the film would be shown at 7.30 a.m. on the final day, when the closing ceremony would ensure a skimpy audience.

Similar cavalier treatment was meted out to three films made by Barbara Kopple, which were not shown at all. Kopple's *Harlan County USA*, a feature-length documentary made in 1980 on coal-miners' struggles to form a union in the American mid-West, and considered a classic internationally, was among the casualties. Two other critically applauded films, *Dark Circle* and *Atomic Café*, were also shown at short notice to meagre audiences.

In the event, Patwardhan withdrew his film from the festival as a protest; but the festival directorate was aware that *A Time to Rise* had won a Silver Dove at the Leipzig Festival in 1981 and the first prize at the Tyneside International Film Festival in England in October last year. The 45-minute colour film documents Indian immigrant farm workers' battles in Canada to unionise and demand better working conditions and wages. It takes a first-ever and dramatic look at the misery of the predominantly Punjabi immigrants in the Vancouver and British Columbia areas. It is being officially distributed by the National Film Board (NFB) of Canada.

Yet, the Censor Board in Bombay first suggested some cuts in the film, and the Revising Committee said the entire film was "objectionable" because it jeopardised "friendly relations with a foreign state". Patwardhan had no option but to take his case to the Bombay High Court; in February, the court ordered that the film ought to be awarded a censor's certificate.

Censorship: The political 16mm film genre is barely a half decade old in India and shows no signs of dying out. Early last year, *An Indian Story*, another colour documentary made by Tapan Bose on the Bhagalpur blindings and repression in Bihar, suffered identical discrimination when it was excluded from the Eighth IFFI, denied a censorship certificate, and finally granted one when the Bombay High Court so ordered. Yet, Bose's film has been shown widely abroad and won a 'great merit' commendation at Tyneside last October.

Shot in 16 mm with extremely rudimentary equipment, made on budgets that would make a shoe-string look positively glamorous, these films have to constantly battle censorship laws, taxation and a myopic bureaucracy.

A Time to Rise is Patwardhan's third documentary. The first, *Waves of Revolution*, was made with primitive Super-8 facilities in 1974 and later blown up to 16mm. It chronicled the Bihar movement spearheaded by Jayaprakash Narayan and had to be smuggled out of the country to be processed in Canada. When the Emergency ended, Patwardhan dropped out of McGill University in Canada to return to India. In 1978, he made *Prisoners of Conscience* on the continuing predicament of political prisoners.

Prisoners ran into trouble with the Janata Government's Censor Board, and only after a nation-wide chorus of protest arose did the Revising Committee reluctantly grant a certificate. The following year when Patwardhan returned to McGill to join a master's course in communications, he got involved with the Support Committee for Farm Workers' Organising Committee in the Vancouver area. Co-produced with Jim Monro, *A Time to Rise* was made on piecemeal funding and aid from other films and church action groups.

Patwardhan (above): still from *A Time to*

and (top) a sc

"THE VERY term 'documentary film' has been made odious in India," says Patwardhan. "Usually the audience expects a government-produced film that is boring and tells lies. An honest documentary becomes an immediate

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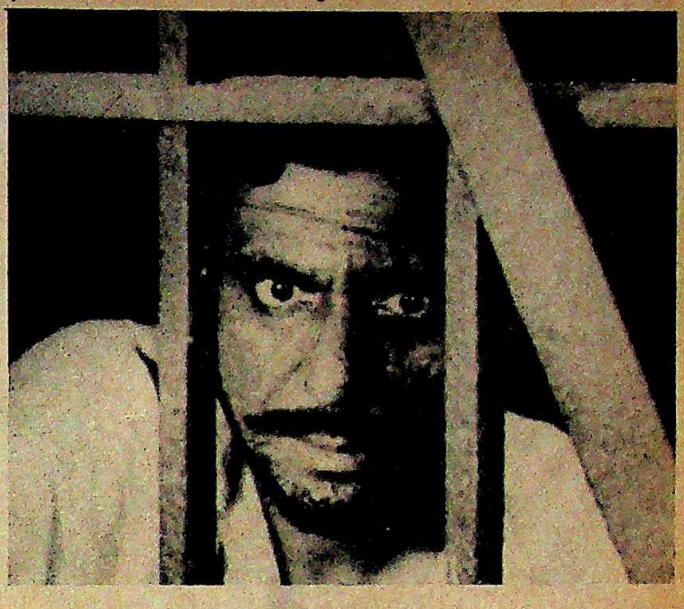
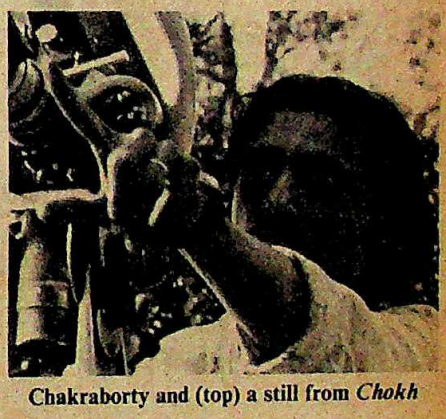


nd (top) a scene from *Indian Story*



Chakraborty and (top) a still from *Chokh*

for the prevailing ideology of the state e it shows a no-frills, factual picture. bout the Third World, the 16 mm entary, because it is portable, direct latively cheap, has become an impor- apon in the hands of the oppositional nicator, thus attracting direct state ment like censorship and police ation."

lternative Cinema: Not all makers of which are an alternative to the com- l cinema possess the wherewithal to ue indefinitely in the 16mm tradition. an Ghosh's *Hungry Autumn*, made in vividly documented the man-made e that had racked Bengal the previous Lauer Ghosh, who had to turn out ad- ng films in order to survive, made ut a full-length feature, with West al Government assistance. Utpalendu aborty's *Mukti Chai* was also made in 70s on the plight of political priso- West Bengal. But even Chakraborty to move to feature film making with ment financial aid, first with *Moyna* and then with *Chokh*, based on the executions of two Naxalite prisoners in Andhra Pradesh during the Emergency, which won a silver Peacock at the Ninth IFFI.

"I show my films to working class audiences, civil rights organisations, activist groups, trade unions and students' and women's organisations," says Patwardhan, "and after the film, I pass the hat around. There is usually a very good reaction from the audience, and in discussions afterwards the question most often asked is: 'What can we do?'. The 250-strong film society circuit around the country also helps provide interested audiences that are preferable to the diffused urban ones. Only when a political documentary is shown to grass roots organisations does it assume direct political significance and become an effective tool."

The 16mm 'alternative film' genre grew out of Latin America, and the four-hour-long classic *Hour of the Furnaces*, made by Fernando Solanos and Octavio Gettino in Argentina in 1970, is considered the touchstone for this rebel class of films. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, 16mm documentaries have effectively chronicled and helped national liberation struggles. Many such films are made in underground secrecy or in exile, as for instance Patricio Guzman's epic, *Battle of Chile*.

El Salvador and Nicaragua have also thrown up excellent political documentaries, and *Last Grave at Dimbaza* ruthlessly exposes how every white man, woman and child in South Africa is being trained to use guns in anticipation of a black uprising. Exiled Pakistani film maker Jamil Dahlavi has made the allegorical *Blood of Hussain* in England on the repression unleashed by the Zia-ul-Haq regime.

Commendable: None of these film makers is obsessed with the technical quality of the films. They shoot with available light, cope with a host of technical problems and scrape together outdated raw stock, poor camera equipment and paltry finances to turn out their products. "In India," says Patwardhan, "a low-level alternative distribution system does exist, but it has to be expanded. There are very few 16mm projectors available. I would like to agitate for better 16mm technology and for scrapping excise duty on 16mm films."

Now working on a film on pavement dwellers in Bombay, Patwardhan admits that he is able to continue with his work because his family supports him financially. Film makers like him and Bose are always in danger of losing out to the essentially mercenary world of commercial, or even 'art', cinema. But their work in itself is an attempt to use the contradictions within the system. With the ruling-class apparatus turning increasingly towards repression and authoritarianism, the efforts of the alternative film makers assume critical importance.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

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BHAVAI

Project Revival

PICTURES BY RAMESH MENON

A modern Bhavai drama: lively innovations to rescue a decaying art

POLITICIANS with honey on their tongues and hypocrisy in their hearts, sons of ministers who have become industrialists overnight, contractors cementing contacts in high places with generous helpings of 'number two', popular religious gurus and repentant dacoit queens: such was the stuff of *Leela*, a satirical drama staged in Ahmedabad last month by Darpana, a performing arts institution. Scripted by the well-known drama critic Bakul Tripathi, *Leela* had the audience, especially the under-30s, riveted to their seats with its slapstick comedy, biting wit and pointed satire.

But *Leela* is more than a satirical look at the present; it is also an attempt to recreate the folk drama form of Bhavai, an entertaining *mélange* of song, dance and dialogue prevalent in Gujarat villages for several hundred years. Itinerant Bhavai troupes took a scalpel to almost everything under the sun: society, history, myth and religion, regaling the audience with pungent comments on contemporary life and manners. Over the years, however, Bhavai has decayed into lifeless theatre.

Outdated scripts and changing preferences—often Bhavai troupes are goaded by villagers into performing cheap Gujarati plays replete with sexual innuendoes—have reduced the Bhavai actor to penury, scraping together barely Rs 300 a month. Complains Shankerlal Nayak: "We have to virtually beg for coins. We have been reduced to a humiliating existence."

Key Project: To revive the lively theatre form, Darpana, which is run by renowned dancer Mrinalini Sarabhai, organised a Bhavai festival last fortnight, after a year of training youngsters in the intricacies of the form. The institution is taking a bold step by inducting women into Bhavai troupes, hitherto all-male, but is trying to retain as much of the old structure as possible. Said Kailash Pandya of Darpana: "We will attempt to refine the present form by doing away with the vulgarity which has polluted Bhavai. We have accepted the challenge of attracting the young and making Bhavai acceptable without compromising." Darpana is also to help the state Government with a Bhavai school to be set up in Visnagar near Mehsana, which will offer a three-year certificate course.

The attempts to breathe new life into Gujarat's ancient folk theatre have come not a day too early. Veteran Bhavai artistes, such as Chimanlal Nayak, 58, [illegible]on the Sangeet Natak Akademi award for folk drama in 1980, are moved almost to tears when they recall its past glories. Not so very long ago, Bhavai was considered [illegible]. When the troupes entered a villa[illegible] were welcomed with drums and [illegible] music. The villagers vied with each [illegible] play host to the artistes. Bhavai artis[illegible] enjoyed royal patronage.

The drama was a community s[illegible]. From dusk, when the artistes started [illegible]ming in the courtyard of a village [illegible] until dawn, the players would point [illegible] fingers at everything and everybody [illegible]ring incisive social criticism with [illegible]. The Bhavai actor had the liberty to [illegible]se, ad-libbing dialogue and creating [illegible] roles which did not exist in the script [illegible] the actors knew what was ha[illegible] around them so that they could m[illegible] drama as relevant as possible.

Old Scripts: From socially relev[illegible]res, Bhavai degenerated to cheap p[illegible]on by popular demand. One rea[illegible] public disinterest was that the Bhav[illegible] were very old, and totally alien to [illegible] themes. For example, scripts such [illegible] *Zoolan* and *Chhel Batu* are over [illegible] old; the latest scripts are over 80 y[illegible]. Even the younger actors lost int[illegible] moved on to more lucrative profes[illegible] few who stuck to Bhavai are in the[illegible]. Asks Manilal Nayak, 45: "Why sh[illegible] courage my 12-year-old son to [illegible]

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Vidya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

...no money or respect for Bhavai ... Darpana is making some progress ...attempts to revive the lively art. Even ...ive Bhavai artistes are giving in to ...able and accepting the idea of girls ...upes, thus breaking an 800-year-old ... Said Chimanlal Nayak: "Times ...ging. We have to accept girls as ...since older actors can hardly give a ...ing performance as a young girl."

...ting Trouble: Darpana was con... with its first hurdle even before the ... began. The problem was that there ...o teachers and traditional Bhavai ...ould not or would not teach. It took ...onths to persuade Chimanlal Nayak ...t his art to the girl students. Even ...Chimanlal and other Bhavai artistes ...be taught to teach.

...sten youngsters are now training at ...s, four of them girls. Says an excited ...Mehta, a student of commerce: "I ...en learning dance at Darpana for the ... years, but now with Bhavai I am ...through a very creative and satisfying ...ce." "Bhavai is more exciting than ...a modern play," agrees Heena ... another young Bhavai student. ...one has to act, dance and sing. ...er, we have the satisfaction of being part of a worthwhile experiment."

RAMESH MENON

Bhavai actors dress up as women

Another of Darpana's moves aimed at refitting an ancient form to a new society is the introduction of scripts that break away from the tried and tested, and, often, stale themes. *Leela* is one of them. Says Tripathi: "The Bhavai scripts have to change to contemporary themes to make them acceptable. While I have tried to retain the traditional Bhavai form, I have taken a lot of liberties and writers will have to do that to keep Bhavai alive." —RAMESH MENON

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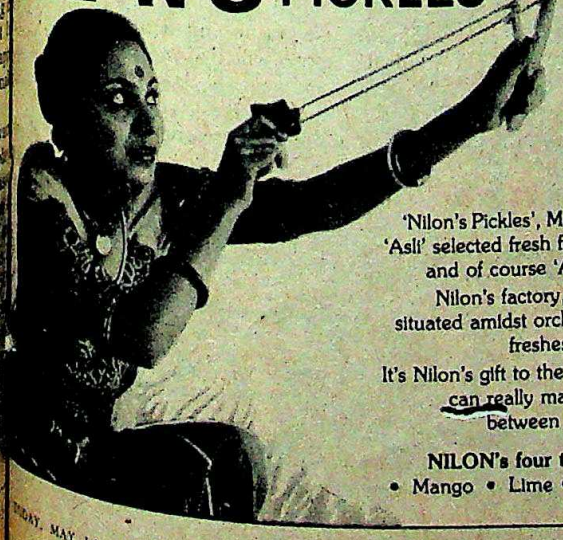

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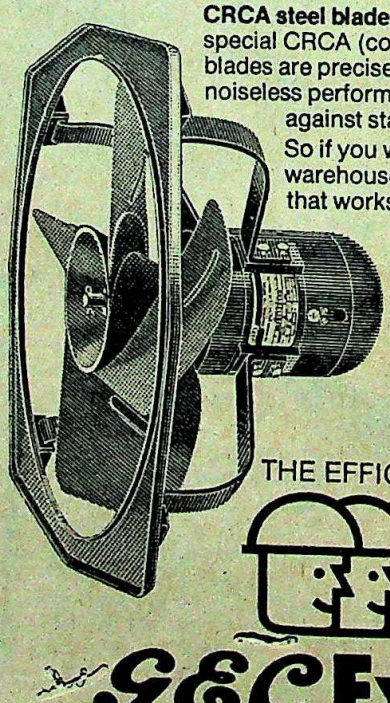

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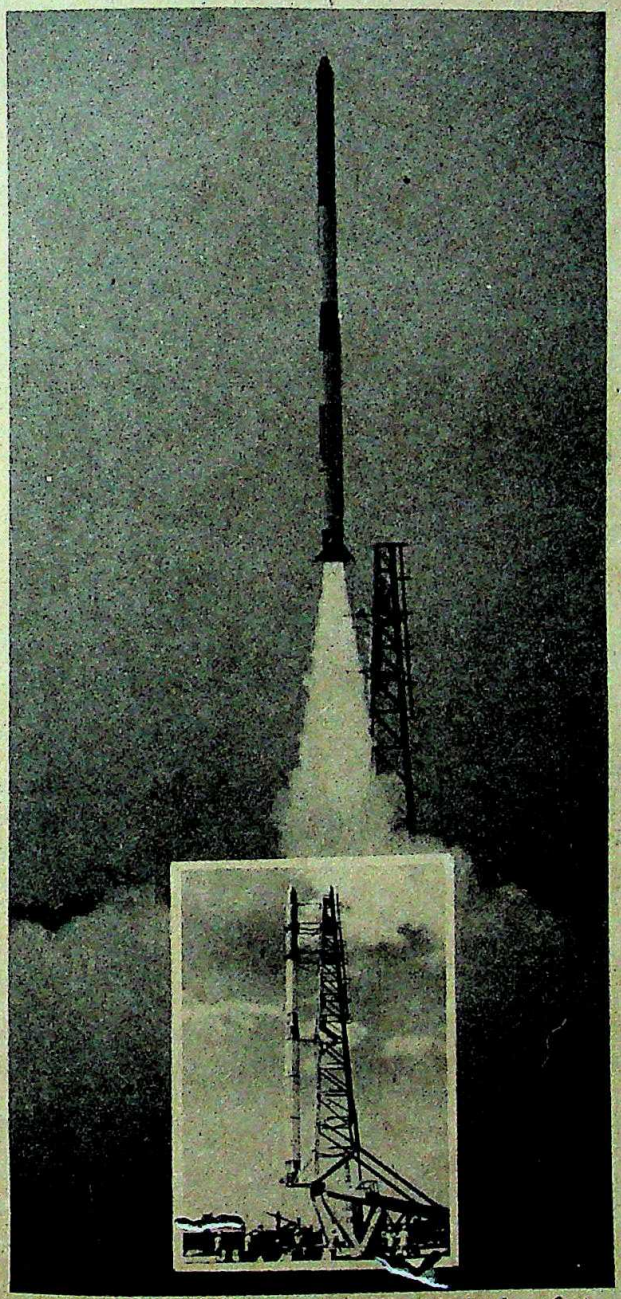
Space Odyssey

THE LAUNCH was textbook perfect. SLV-3, the sleek 22.7 metre, red and white rocket soared majestically into with the Rohini satellite payload to the first phase of the Indian rocketry became last fortnight. The April 17 the fourth and final one in the SLV-3 confirmed its status as a work-horse to the powerful launchers of the future. From the start of the final 23-hour down, everything went off clockwork precision that sur- even the scientists. But with eight minutes to go for the of the bespectacled mission Dr. Ved Prakash Sandlas, 38, faced a hold. The prospect of a after foul-up was gloomily feared but it turned out that an had forgotten to press a He did so and the count- resumed for the final ten computerised sequence. A delay of five minutes and 45 the rocket called SLV-3 D-2 into the bright Sunday mor-

Anxious scientists and techni- waited for 10 minutes as the dicated array of instruments in blockhouse bunker kept an un- vigil even after the rocket beyond human view. Then announced over the com- tion network: "All the four appear to have performed fully and all separations inclu- the heat shield have occurred at correct time. The satellite has injected into an orbit and has separated from the fourth We will wait for another one and 45 minutes for reconfirma- of the orbit from the Trivan- ground station."

Excitement: Handshakes and were exchanged at the block- bunker, close to the launch pad excited scientists and techni- took their posts on the 15,300-acre Sriharikota Range (SHAR). and Prime Minister Indira who watched the blast-off: "For it was a special thrill. Al- though I am well above 60, I have not lost the sense of wonder and awe at what man can achieve. Although I have seen launchings and in films this is the first time I was actually at the site." Her presence and the unqualified success of the launching led to speculation on how long it would take to make the work-horse of rockets of the future into a war-horse. Said Vasant Gowarikar, the 50-year-old director of the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Trivandrum: "We are basically concerned with a wholly indigenous and fully controlled and guided multi-stage rocket technology. We have moved a step ahead as the confidence placed in the fourth stage motor has been proved."



SLV-3 before lift-off (inset) and after: textbook perfect

In launcher three, 18 major improvements and modifications were made over those in the earlier rockets. The most striking one was the use of a special aerospace material, a fibre-reinforced plastic, for the uppermost fourth stage motor casing. Explained Gowarikar: "With this material the deadweight of the motor was brought down from 26 kilos to 16 kilos and the fuel pack up from 270 kilos to 320 kilos. This helped the rocket travel further and propel the satellite at a greater height." In fact, the SLV-3 D-2 rocket carried the Rohini satellite into a nominal orbit of 974 km by 438 km.

While the SLV-3 series is intended to improve launcher technology, the Rohini series of satellites it carried into space have also been improved with every launch. The latest Rohini has a high-precision camera that identifies landmarks for working out the orbital path and classifying ground features like water, vegetation, bare land and snow. It is aptly called the "smart sensor".

Improvement: The launch, scheduled for September last, was dogged by several delays. First it was the snags in the motors and the faults in the high altitude testing facility where the fourth stage was tested for space-worthiness. Later fuel tanks leaked and one exploded to add to the delay. Admitted a SHAR source: "The campaign that was to last 45 days took over six months. The delay was agonising but the experience was useful to make a flawless launch. It was the best we have had."

Now after spending Rs 26 crore on the SLV-3 mission, the Indian Space Research Organisation is skipping two more launches with rockets of the same design to speed up work on the augmented satellite launch vehicle (ASLV). The ASLV is essentially figured around the SLV-3 with two strap-on boosters derived from the first stage SLV-3 motor. It can orbit satellites weighing 150 kg and more. But with the cash flow likely to be reduced it may take more than two years to launch the first of the ASLV's. After this will come the polar satellite launch vehicle (PSLV) that can hurl sophisticated satellites weighing between 600 and 1,000 kg will use liquid fuel besides solid fuels. But with the ASLV programmes delayed, the first of the PSLV's may not be launched till after the turn of the decade.

—AMARNATH K. MENON in Sriharikota

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riting On Walls

STHAN
ted Walls of Shekhavati
NCIS WACZIARG
MAN NATH

Rs 250; Pages: 119

FINE books on the art of India are not as rare as they used to be, though they continue to be precious and even elitist. The two kinds of books that have been published after Independence are firstly ly works by art historians, more or dressed to other art historians and y handsome well-illustrated books for the discriminating reader, who like to own a book that is itself a work *The Painted Walls of Shekhavati* ly belongs to the second category.

owever, this study is important not cause it is well-produced and well- but because it deals with a little subject—a phase of popular mural g that flowered like exotic cacti in the han desert. Francis Wacziarg and Nath should be complimented for ststaking research which is presented in a pleasant blend of scholarship and anecdotic conversation. They obviously enjoyed the adventure of discovering and documenting this unknown art, and communicate something of their excitement and enthusiasm to the reader.

The book includes a brief history, a description of the milieu and the types of people whose patronage resulted in these painted walls. They further give statements about the techniques which were used, information which should be useful to artists, and discuss the wide range of buildings and subject matter characteristic of the different places and periods. Though the practice of painting walls in Shekhavati flourished for a comparatively short period—approximately 1610 to 1890 A.D., we see that it encompassed considerable variety, from the most orthodox—painting in temples—to paintings in forts, *havelis, chhatris*, and the small kiosks associated with wells. In all cases the main aim was to embellish or ornament, a very traditional Indian need, where to ornament was an act of devotion, of praise, of love. These houses and rooms, *chhatris* and shrines are dressed with pictures as women are adorned with jewels. It is the unseemliness of naked walls, their barrenness, which no doubt prompted patron and artist to cover them with visual jewellery. One is struck by the aptness of the decoration, by the division of mass and space, by the rhythms created by repetition, and the artist's intuitive understanding and distribution of painted surfaces, which seem an inalienable part of the architecture.

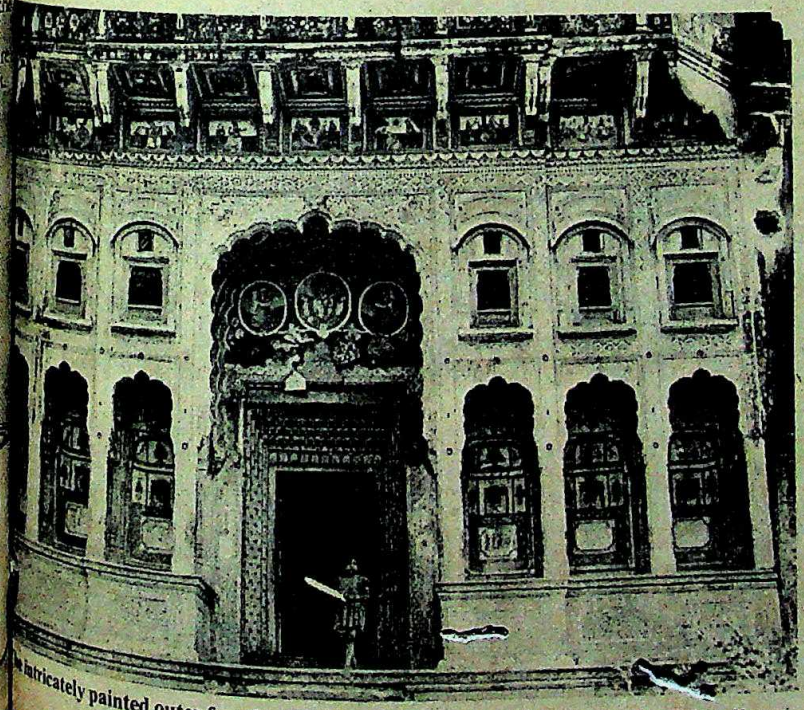
Environmental Art: It was not prosperity or pride alone that demanded art but a desire for fullness or abundance, a plenitude that was always considered auspicious. As the authors suggest, the austerity of the desert, and the harshness of life perhaps stimulated a desire for colour and form. However, this colour and form is here integrated with architecture, it belongs to the wall, it is flat and two-dimensional, and does not intrude into the enclosed or outer spaces. Life streams around it and through it, and it is simply the environment, the jewel case that is also as splendid as the jewel.

The most important part of the book is undoubtedly its colour plates—of which there are over a hundred. The collection is an assemblage of careful photography, composition and detail, though the printing is not altogether even, the total effect is rich and sumptuous even as the painted walls are. Every page has its interest and contributes something to the cumulative effect. A special word of praise should be reserved for the layout which has been worked out with infinite care.

The notes with the plates are both informative and interesting. They give together with basic information, a wealth of subsidiary detail, and foreigners will find simple explanations of the subjects derived from the complex Hindu pantheon. But above all it is the paintings themselves that fascinate one. Done by professional artisans, they have a candour and expressiveness, which their limited means does not suppress. They glory in their own statements, and are the counterpart of the songs of village bards or folk poetry. Though some subjects are traditional, others are from experience, and yet others solely imaginary. They delineate the ancient myths, and in the same dialect scenes from contemporary life. Whoever the actors —and these include kings and heroes, animals and birds, and ordinary men and women—in this pageant, they become a part of a vast tapestry that clothes the walls. People, animals or birds, moving in front do not disturb the picture: they too belong to the pattern.

One also notes that in spite of their enthusiasm, the authors have their feet firmly on the ground. The contents are presented methodically, and every assistance, from maps to a glossary and bibliography, assist the delighted reader. My only complaint, if it can indeed be called one, is that the price—Rs 250—puts it somewhat beyond the reach of many art lovers.

—JAYA APPASAMY



An intricately painted outer facade of a Marwari *haveli* in Rajasthan: visual jewellery

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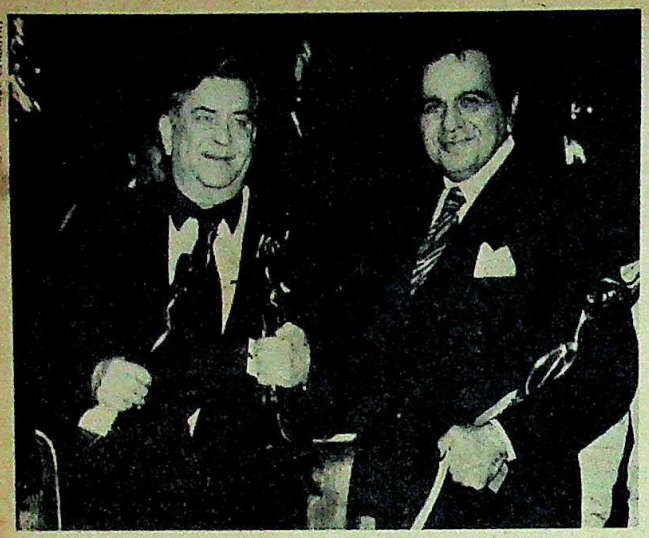

RAJU UPADHYAY

Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar with their awards: old masters

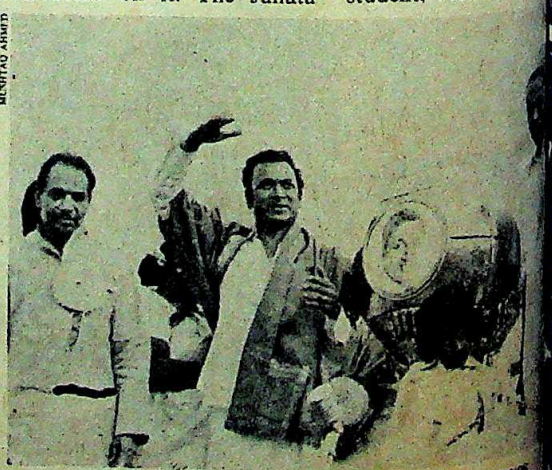
■ It had everything a movie *aficionado* could want: song, dance, comedy. Pure spectacle. A joyous carousel. It was the big night, the night tinseltown waits patiently all year for. Thirty years after they were introduced, the Filmfare awards are still going strong, overflowing with their intoxicating brew of razzmatazz and stardust. Strangely, this year's show was stolen, not by superstar Amitabh Bachchan or the teenybopper stars, but by three veterans who had steered the movie business into becoming the eternal force it is today. **Dilip Kumar** winning the best actor award for a record eighth time, **Raj Kapoor** bagging two awards for *Prem Rog* and music maestro **Naushad** who was the chief guest. Also, presiding over the event, and making all the appropriate noises was Gujarat Chief Minister and former film scribe, Madhavsinh Solanki. True to spirit, there also were the usual histrionics—much feet touching and many bear hugs. But nothing, not even Oscar winner Bhanu Athaiya, Amjad Khan's hilarious comedy or singer Kishore Kumar's rare appearance could steal the thunder from the starry triumvirate who had the teeming crowds at the city's Shanmukhananda Hall eating out of their hands with every gesture and every move.

■ The trouble with actors turning politicians is that they can never give up their thespian habits. Take Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister **N.T. Rama Rao** whose fetching new habit could be straight out of one of his movies; a bright ochre dhoti and kurta with an embroidered shawl draped casually across his shoulders. But it appears that this is one habit he will henceforth wear for the rest of his real-life role, in accordance with his recent decision to take up *sanyaas*. Says he: "I am no longer the lustful and gorgeous-looking Rama Rao but a yogic chief minister. A saint should rule the state. The spirit of renunciation would elevate the office of chief minister. It will also make people aware of the fact that a man of *dharma* is at the helm of affairs and a person with bad intentions will not approach him." Whether the change of attire suits him or not is still a moot point but there seems nothing wrong with having a yogic chief minister considering that India has tried every other kind with varying degrees of failure.

M.A. KAJUR

Rama Rao: karmayogi

■ Meanwhile, in neighbouring Karnataka, another film star bitten by the political bug was girding for battle. Kannada matinee idol **Raj Kumar,** whose fan following in Karnataka rivals that of NTR or Tamil Nadu's MGR, was the central figure in an orgy of celebrations held in Bangalore to felicitate his winning the Padma Bhushan and also to celebrate his fifty-third birthday. At the glittering function, Kumar was presented with a huge Rs 25,000 gold-plated globe with his picture embossed on it. The Janata Government, aware of [illegible] potential political threat [illegible] the rules by allowing him [illegible] hire a helicopter and [illegible] stadium venue with flo[illegible] visibly moved Kumar [illegible] cally announced: "If [illegible] born again, I would like [illegible] born in Karnataka." Ob[illegible] however, were betting [illegible] next reincarnation wo[illegible] that of a politician and [illegible] Kumar has been stubbo[illegible] nying any political am[illegible] nobody can deny that [illegible] Minister Hegde and C[illegible] been careful not to rub [illegible] the wrong way.


MUSHTAQ AHMED

Kumar and the golden globe: making waves

SIGN POSTS

■ **Died:** Dr K.K. [illegible] internationally-known [illegible] logist, in Bombay, after [illegible] illness.

■ **Died:** D.S. Des[illegible] pularly known as Ba[illegible] Desai, of a kidney [illegible] Desai was a state cabinet [illegible] ter for 14 years and wa[illegible] regarded as the strong[illegible] Maharashtra politics.

■ **Died:** S.V. Purshot[illegible] deputy permanent re[illegible] tative of India at the U[illegible] heart attack in New[illegible] Purshottam had ser[illegible] Indian high commissio[illegible] Malawi and as joint [illegible] tary in the External [illegible] Ministry.

■ **Married:** Asiad [illegible] gold medallist and [illegible] Kesari' Satpal, to Delhi [illegible] student, Veena Chaud[illegible]

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INDIA TODAY
JUNE 15, 1983
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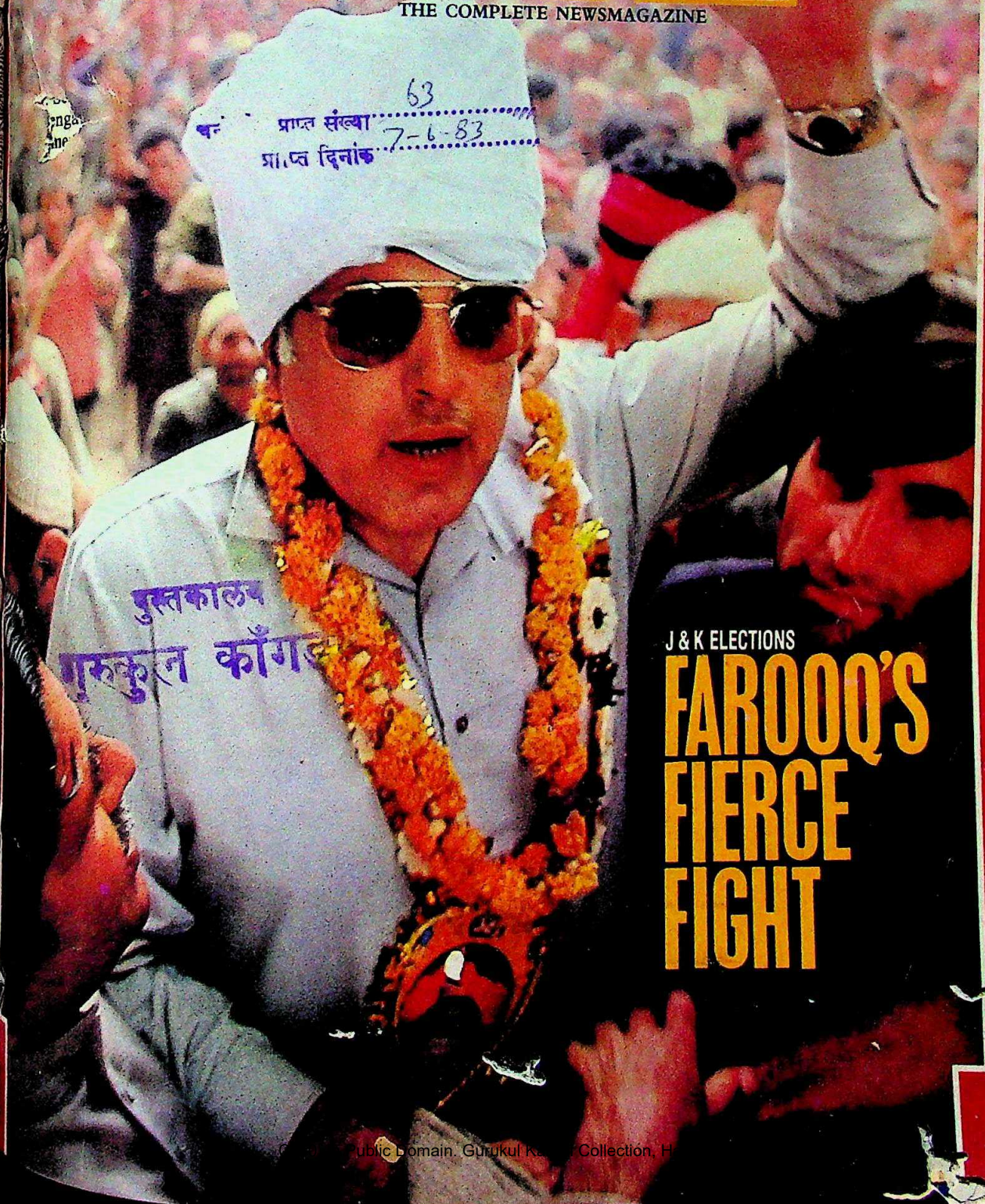
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

प्राप्त संख्या 63
प्राप्त दिनांक 7-6-83
पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल काँगड़ी



J & K ELECTIONS

FAROOQ'S FIERCE FIGHT

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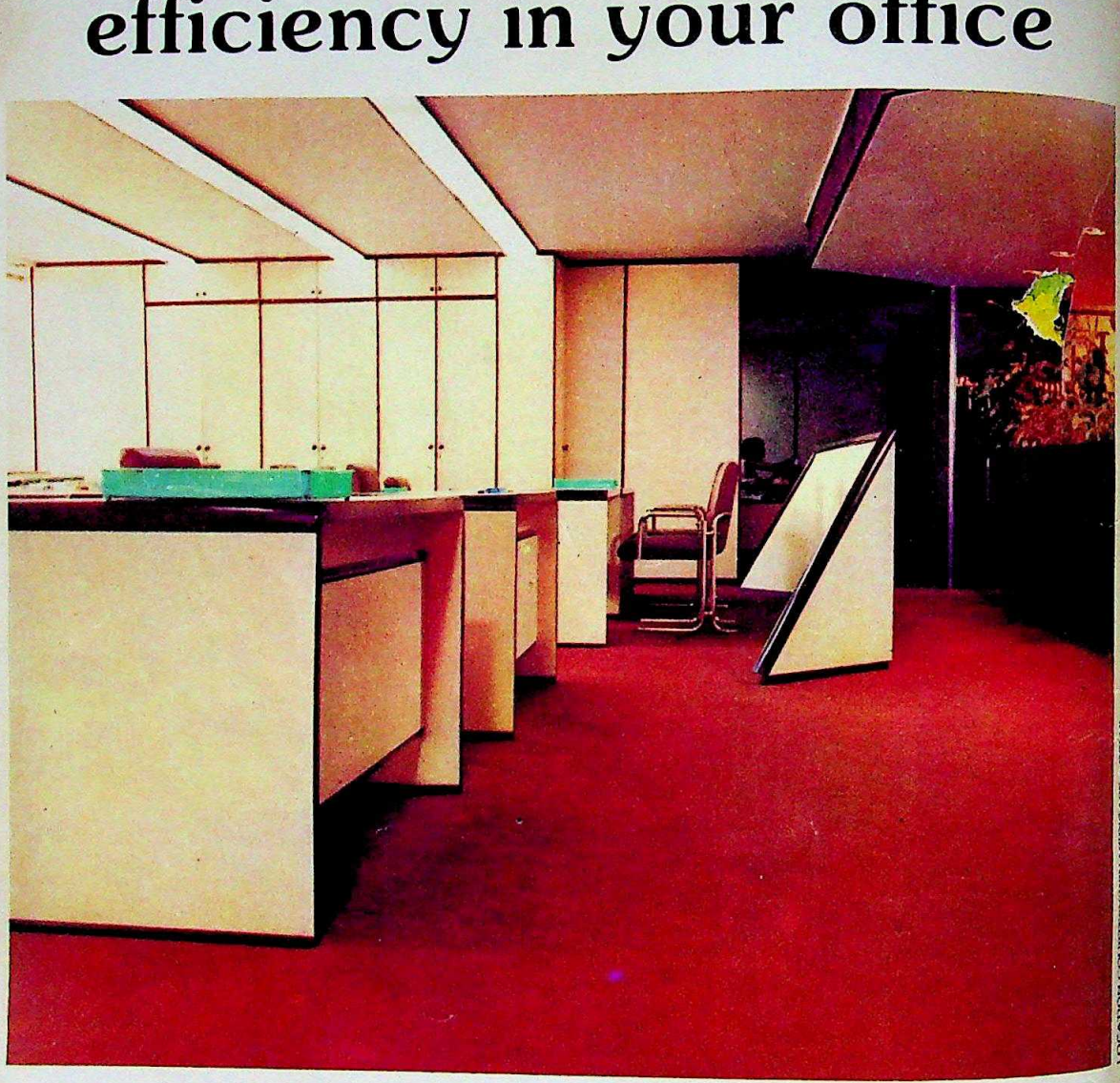

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Eye-catchers

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY BHAWAN SINGH

J & K Elections

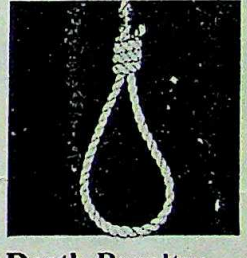
Few state elections have roused such strong emotions and produced as vituperative sloganeering as the approaching Kashmir poll. It is also the most violent in the state's history. Kashmir, however, is no ordinary state and nor are the elections. With Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah desperate to legitimise popular support and the Congress(I) equally desperate to make a creditable showing, it promises to be the most bitterly contested poll in recent years. **Cover Story • Page 12**

Karnataka

As admissions began to the 12 government and private medical colleges in Karnataka, eight privately-run colleges were getting ready to collect their annual share of capitation fees from over 600 students. The capitation fees for aspiring doctors ranges from a staggering Rs 60,000 for a local resident to Rs 3.25 lakh for a foreigner. An in-depth report.
Investigation • Page 70

Madhya Pradesh

Ensuring implementation of the Minimum Wages Act is one of the tenets of the 20-point programme. Yet, investigations in Madhya Pradesh reveal that those entrusted with its implementation—state ministers and Congress(I) leaders—are paying their own farm labourers less than what the Act stipulates. **Special Report • Page 62**



Death Penalty:

After a series of stay orders by the Supreme Court which have for the while saved the lives of several criminals in the dock from the hangman's noose, a rousing public debate has erupted over the issue of capital punishment. While some have protested over the stay orders which have given clemency to the sentenced killers, others see in it a new change in legal attitudes.
Law • Page 112

Quarrying

In an effort to develop the "industrially backward" Dehra Dun, the Uttar Pradesh Government gave a green signal for scores of limestone quarries and ancillary industries to sprout in the Doon Valley. But as a sop to ecologists, the Government recently attempted to ban quarrying in the hills, which to everybody's consternation remains ineffective.
Environment • Page 58

Excise Duty

Very rarely has so much money hung in the balance in the corporate sector over a single court verdict as it did last fortnight, when the Supreme Court handed down a landmark judgement forcing companies to pay accumulated excise duties. The liabilities in many cases exceeded the company's profits. The judgement has alarmed the corporate world.
Excise Duty • Page 92

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how to own a new home with someone else's money

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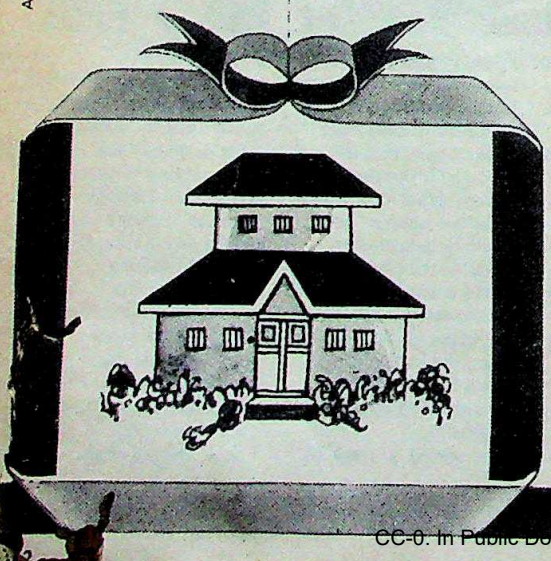

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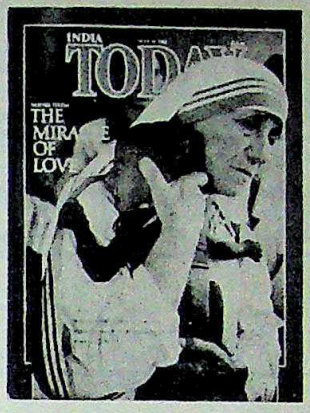

SELFLESS DEDICATION

The cover story ("The Miracle Of Love", May 31) was one of the most touching and heart-rending articles. I have read. One wishes there were more Mother Teresas in today's world for the poor and downtrodden. Her sense of love and sacrifice is phenomenal and it is only her devotion to this cause that reminds us of the harsh realities of the poor, dying and unwanted.
New Delhi *Shahnaz Rana*

■ I cannot agree with the writer's view that "in India there is a painfully pronounced lack of love and concern for each other." Substitute "the world" with "India" and I'll agree. It's high time some optimism was injected into our people's hearts.
New Delhi *Kavita*

■ It is unfortunate that Mother Teresa received the Bharat Ratna only after she received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. It is sad that the Indian Government could not recognise her worth till then.
Patna *Nilotpol Dasgupta*

IMPROVING TRADE

Your correspondent has done a commendable job in highlighting the dangerous consequences of persisting with the rupee payment arrangement ("Rouble Trouble", May 31). It is clear from your report that this arrangement has outlived its utility and needs to be changed to a convertible currency system if the Indo-Soviet trade relations have to be developed to the benefit of both the countries.
Delhi *Shanti Saroop Bansal*

POST-MORTEM

Arun Shourie's article "Assam Elections: Come What May" (May 15) unveils the black background of the elections quite substantially. Can India still be called the world's largest 'democracy'? How can an election in which the forecast was violence, the campaigners were policemen and the results were 1,383 dead be called a 'democratic' one? The Government has, in a nutshell, exhibited many qualities such as political fanaticism, cold-bloodedness, inefficiency etc. The agitationists' action is also not justified. Just because the Government has committed a blunder it does not mean that the agitationists can go ahead and massacre innocent people and justify the killings.
Bangalore *K.P. Singh*

■ The exposé on the Nellie massacre proved beyond doubt that in today's politics the 'seat' is the ultimate goal 'come what may' to the people who actually give these politicians the votes.
Pondicherry *Rakesh Puri*

■ Despite so much hue and cry being raised over the Assam elections the Centre ought to be congratulated for its drive in annihilating the Assam problems. It reminds me of the speech by Otto Von Bismarck—'Not by speeches and majority votes are the great questions of the day decided but by blood and iron'.

With Mrs Gandhi at the helm of affairs, Assam is bound to become normal.
Agra Cantt *Kuldeep Kochhar*

■ Kudos to Arun Shourie for the revealing report on Assam elections which has thrown open many a skeleton in the Government cupboard on their relentless quest for sticking to the seat of power.
Ghaziabad *Eejay Thomas*

■ It is evident that the Congress(I) wanted power in Assam even at the cost of human lives. Can such a government be for the people, and by the people?
Hyderabad *Dr C.V.R. Rao*

■ When will the great lady,
of whose glamour across the world
we feel so proud,
wake up to the wisdom
in the trite saying
"As thou sowest,
So thou reapest".
New Delhi *S.K. Dey*

■ The cover story is journalism run amok. It abuses classified information and castigates men on the spot who courageously faced a difficult situation. The story evades the complex issues involved and evidently yearns for the brief kick of popular acclaim.
New Delhi *L.M. Bhatia*

■ I am forced to point out that your magazine portrays mostly murders, communal and caste clashes and publishes gruesome pictures. In the current issue you have concentrated on the Assam killings and the

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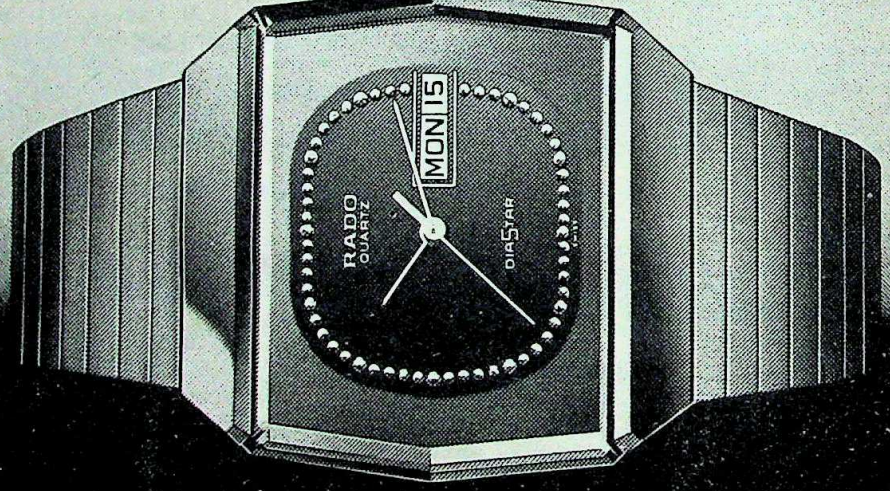

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...nal trouble, Punjab murders, tribal ...ke in Arunachal Pradesh. Can't you spare ... of the pages for a story of the ...ve works of the Central and state ...ernments?

M.G. Sundaram

...bay

...COMMENT

...You have given a very apt comment on ...administration ("Keeping Everyone ...ure", May 15). Your interpretation of ...malady is by and large correct and the ...dy suggested is not available in the ...try. The only hope lies in our having ...h in God.

S.S. Dhesi

...ngalore

...It is really unfortunate that insecurity ...ear of a "kick from the high command" ...made ministers more corrupt than ever. ...also true that any work done under the ...psychosis is bound to suffer.

Hussain E. Beguwala

...bay

...What India needs is another Mahatma ...ndhi and not Indira Gandhi. The need of ...present hour is a charismatic leader—a ...ader not of able administration but of pure ...unadulterated social consciousness.

...ikri *N. Khadir Esmail*

...L IN A NAME

...The general slant of the article on the ..."Looking Inwards", May 15) portrays it ...political party with a strong Hindu bias. ...p has any bias, it is a Gandhian outlook ...national affairs and to that extent it is a ...ional party. BJP's value based on secularism ...uld not be confused with Hindu re-...form. Such groupings have no future on ...dian political scene.

...Delhi

Kamal Wadhwa

...APANESE MIX-UP

...Your Trade Winds report "Starting ...Sierra" (May 15) is wrong and mislead-... Punjab Tractors Ltd have not had any ...ussions with Hitachi-Daihatsu, and is at ...dvanced stage of finalising arrangements ...h another leading vehicle manufacturer ...Japan.

...ow Dist

Ashok Chhabra
secretary
Punjab Tractors Ltd

...ECOND LOOK

...The present Pradesh Congress ...mittee(I) President of Rajasthan is ...ri Kishore Sharma and not Ram ...ore Vyas as mentioned in the story ..."Reprieve" (May 15). Vyas died two ...ago.

Dr V.S. Saxena

...error is regretted.

—Editor

FILM POTENTIAL

"Political films: Finding a Voice" (May 15) was a refreshing change from the usual features on a particular film. This new class of films could be a more potent tool for spreading messages to the public than any other media.

Delhi *Sandip Kumar Beri*

DRAMA IN LIFE

Your review of the film *Lekhayude Maranam—Oru Flashback* (Imitation of Life", May 15) was unimpressive and had some false information as well. Shoba's body was found in May 1980 and not 1981 as mentioned in the article. The plot has nothing to do with the life of the late actress. There is, however, one similarity between the film and Shoba's death (not life). K.G. George has managed to get the same sort of publicity that cinematographer Balu Mahendra got after Shoba's death.

Madras *Manoj Raju*

■ The actress who played the role of Lekha in the film *Lekhayude Maranam—Oru Flashback* was Nalini and not Malini as mentioned.

Tiruchy *S. Ravindran*

FOREIGN HAND

It is unfair on the part of Swraj Paul to dub Indian industry a feudal one ("The Great Takeover Scare", May 15). He should have tried to understand the socio-economic and the political background and set-up in which the Indian industrialists operate, before issuing a statement like that.

A son stepping into the father's shoe and a father grooming his children to his chair is not only an Indian affair but a universal phenomenon.

Bangalore *Ramanand Sharma*

■ Swraj Paul's allegation that "Indian industry is feudal" is correct to a certain extent. With a 4 per cent shareholding how can an executive make his son the managing director of the company? This is a debatable point. Swraj Paul has succeeded in highlighting this issue.

Trivandrum *K. Balagopal*

■ It's a business world and what Swraj Paul is doing in India is not wrong. He has been successful in exposing the corporate leakages and weaknesses in the Indian trade and industry, which has been feudal no doubt. Two of the industrial giants are in "danger" before a non-resident. What a shame? Their decades-old wealth and wisdom against Swraj Paul's financial wizardry and worth, what's wrong? He is paying in cash.

Nairobi *I.P. Singh*

■ My interview published in the May 15 issue is correctly recorded except that I did not make a categorical statement that I was refusing to transfer the ownership of any shares. It is only the full board of directors who can take a decision not to grant approval of transfer of shares to the new transferee as per the memorandum and articles of association of the company and the Company Law Board.

New Delhi *H.P. Nanda*
chairman, Escorts

■ In my interview it is mentioned that I said that I will refuse to register the shares by Mr Swraj Paul. What I had actually mentioned was that the board of the company has the right not to transfer the shares of anyone. This is provided for in the Companies Act.

New Delhi *Bharat Ram*
chairman, DCM

FIGHTING TERRORISM

I cannot understand why the Government is not taking action against the community whose motto is only violence and terrorism ("Rising Extremism", April 30). Bhindranwale should realise that playing with bullets and swords is as dangerous as playing with fire. It is sad that educated people like P.S. Badal and Balwant Singh are supporting Bhindranwale.

Gujarat *D.P. Bhatt*

■ Your write up on the rising extremism in Punjab gives the impression that you support the stand of the Akalis. You should play down the movement.

Ganaur *Bela Sahni*

IN PUBLIC INTEREST

I would like to make some clarification regarding your report "Finance: A Peerless Money Spinner" April 30). It did not mention the fact that as far back as in 1978, the company had voluntarily proposed, in public interest, to co-opt directors on its board, if and when nominated by the RBI or the Central Government.

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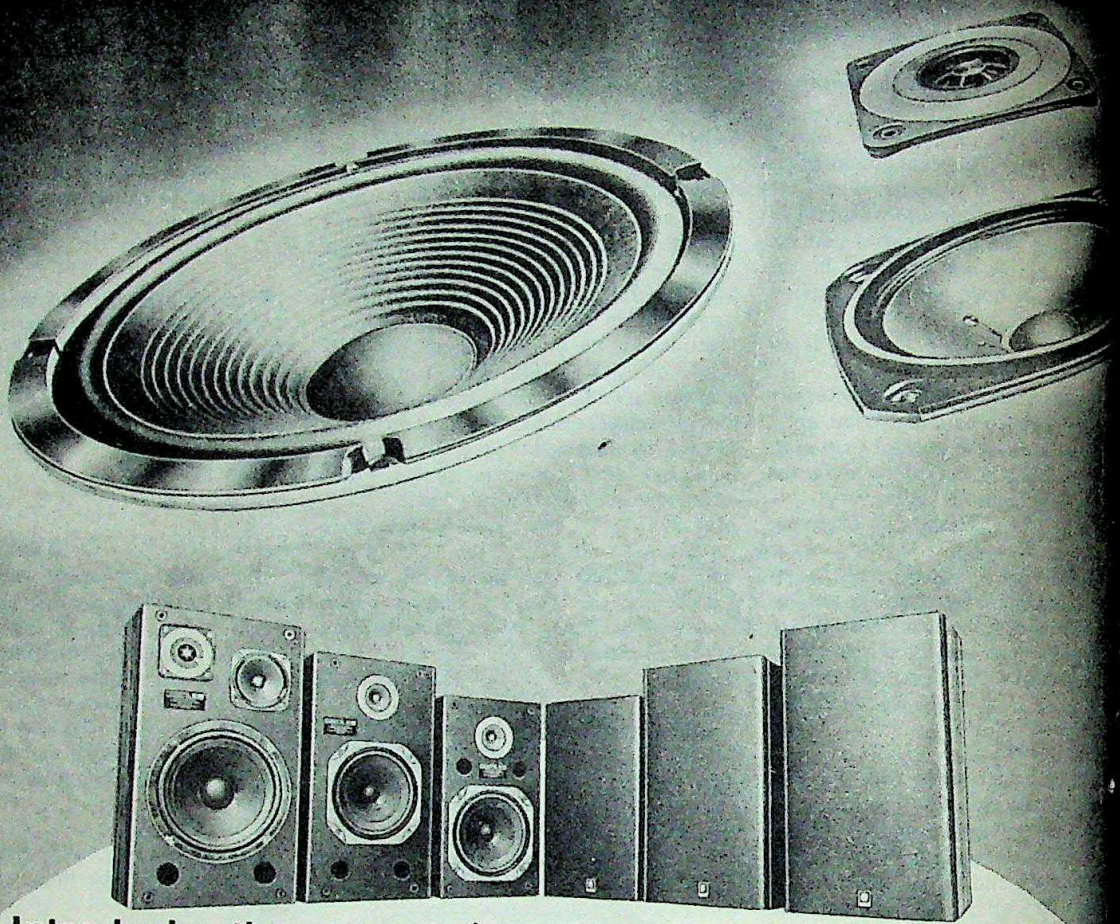

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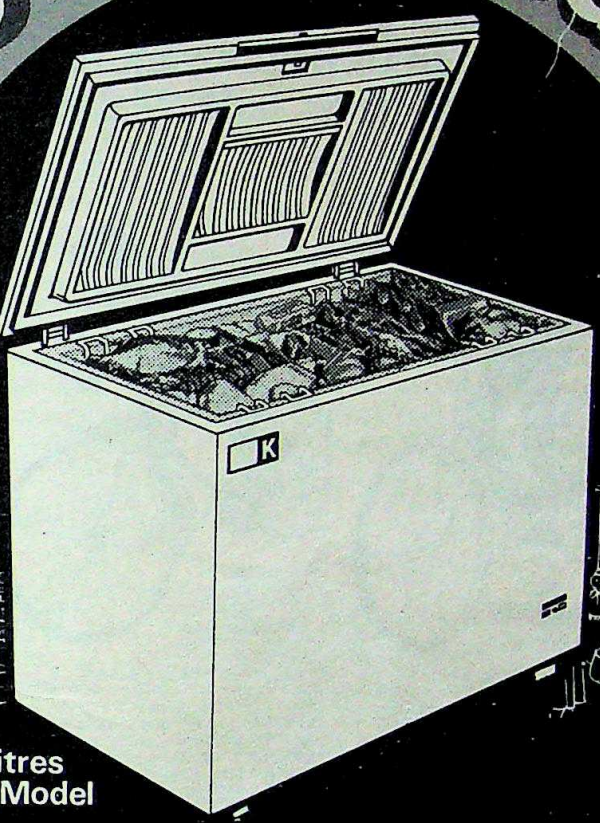

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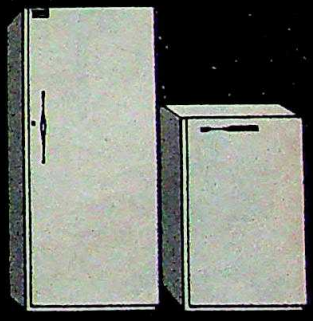

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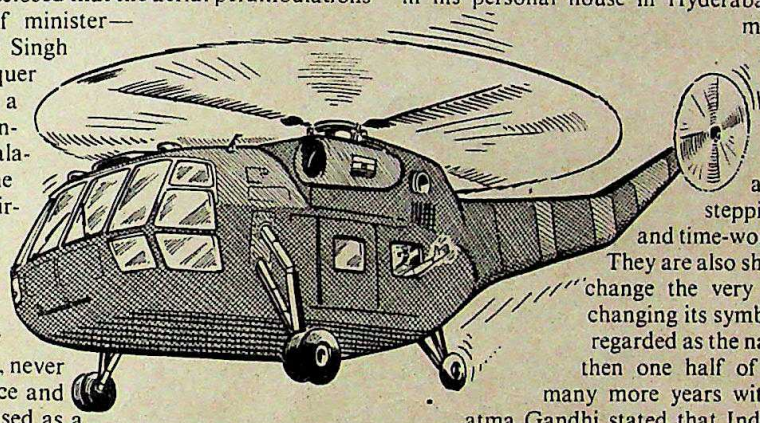
INDIA TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

Helicopter Politics

IT IS time we realised the importance of symbols in our political system. Symbols are not static. They are created because they have come to represent values and behaviour in society. Symbols provide bridges between the rulers and the ruled; they also act as barriers. The pomp and pageantry of the British Raj, and even its forbidding regal architecture, conveyed to the masses the message that they were subjects, not citizens, under imperial rule.

In the India of the '80s, the life-style of our political leaders has become a symbol of the great human divide between them and the rest of the population. Today, our chief ministers hop into helicopters at the slightest excuse, ostensibly to meet the masses. Their delusions of grandeur, however, make them quite oblivious to the fact that in most cases, the crowds congregate to see the machine and not the man. And at what cost is this accomplished? It was recently disclosed that the aerial perambulations of one Congress(I) chief minister—Madhya Pradesh's Arjun Singh—had cost the state exchequer an average of Rs 10,000 a day! On terra firma, they ensconce themselves in palatial bungalows and tour the countryside in imported air-conditioned limousines.



Little do they realise that in the process they are effectively insulating themselves from the daily grind of Indian life. In fact, never before has ministerial office and its attendant perks been used as a reward for services rendered or for minimising nuisance value. It is painfully obvious that most dissident activity in the states is rooted in the greed for the office and its appurtenances. Furthermore no effort is made to cloak these intentions.

Perhaps our ministers would govern better if, occasionally, like the people they govern, they travelled in a crowded bus or stood in a queue to buy kerosene or jostled for a train ticket at a railway booking counter. It is a complete fallacy to justify lavish expenditure on travel and living on the grounds that the pressures of office are easier handled in an atmosphere of comfort. This can only be correct in terms of a straight time calculation. The wheels of progress grind slowly in India and by not travelling in an Indian-made car or taking an ordinary commercial flight and living in an ordinary house India's development is hardly going to suffer a major setback. Rather, it would probably increase the stature of the leaders in the eyes of the people.

Apparently this is what is happening to leaders who are making an attempt to come closer to the people. The enthusiasm Chandra Shekhar is generating on his long, lonely walk is of the genuine grassroots variety. There is hope, admiration and empathy on the faces that watch him stride by, not the starstruck awe with which people gaze on helicopters.

This new identification is not confined to Chandra Shekhar alone. It is happening to those leaders who are making a genuine effort to get back to the people. The defeat of the Congress(I) in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka is widely attributed to the high-profile and flashy life-style of the previous chief ministers and to Mrs Gandhi's mechanical impersonal campaigning.

The enormous popular acclaim that the current chief ministers, Ramakrishna Hegde and N.T. Rama Rao, enjoy is largely a result of the restraint exercised in their personal life-styles. Hegde drives around in an Ambassador and till recently lived in his personal residence. Rama Rao drives around in a Fiat, and on personal work uses his own car, an ancient Packard. He lives in his personal house in Hyderabad and has forbidden his ministerial colleagues to use imported cars.

Together with Chandra Shekhar, they are new symbols of hope. They are symbols of politicians attempting to start anew by stepping outside the battered and time-worn frame of Indian politics. They are also showing that it is possible to change the very substance of politics by changing its symbols. If Asiad and NAM are regarded as the national symbols of success, then one half of our villages will remain many more years without water. When Mahatma Gandhi stated that India's first President should be an illiterate Harijan woman he was merely seeking an appropriate symbol for the newly-born Indian state. He, more than anyone else, realised the importance of the right kind of symbols. In his khadi and sandals he walked the countryside, mobilising the masses through direct contact and personal example. His symbolic acts of defiance humbled the Raj. By cleaning toilets and living with Harijans, he made a mockery of the caste system. He was the symbol of India's new awakening.

Ten days before he was killed, in a post-prayer discourse, he admonished ministers and civil servants for imitating the life-style of their departing British masters. "We have to cut our cloth according to our needs," he lectured. "There is no merit in hiding our poverty. Indian leaders should not forget that a man's value does not depend on the money he earns." Or, he might have added, the power he wields. India's present leaders, cocooned in modern-day comfort, might do better if they paid him some heed. Or, as the electorate of the country has shown, there are democratic ways of making our high-flying leaders bite the dust they try so hard to avoid.

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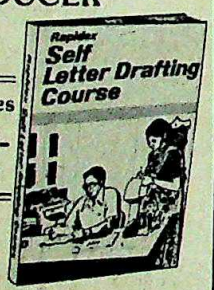

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VANDANA/PM/Tam-20

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» I cannot think of MGR declaring war on the Centre on the question of rice merely blaming the Centre for his and his ministers' incapacity, inability and ciency....Such a man can never revolt against the Centre—ever.

—*M. Karunanidhi in* Onlo

» The marriage of Maneka with Sanjay was the result of a conspiracy of cer forces who wanted to infiltrate into my house.

—*Mrs Indira Gandhi at a party conference in Luck*

» With advancing age and an erratic memory she (Mrs Gandhi) is suffering fr great mental strain. This is obvious from the fact that at a serious party meetin Lucknow she talked less about Punjab and Assam and more about Maneka....It i in the interest of the country to have an unwell prime minister.

—*Mrs Maneka Gandhi in a statement to the press in New D*

» Guru Govind Singh created us and if Mahatma Gandhi is going to abuse him should we consider him as our *rashtra pita* (father of the nation)? These slaves, press, television, the media, they accept this; we don't.

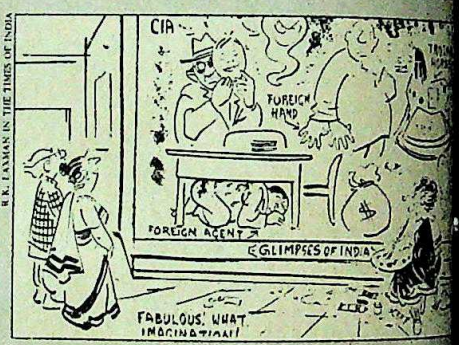
—*Harminder Singh Sandhu, general secretary of the Akali Dal youth wing in* Sund

» The basic problem with Indian businessmen is that they cannot move an inch thout protection. They often talk of competition; in real life they cry like babies seekin mother's protection. Competition and protection cannot go hand in hand.

—*Industrialist Jit Paul in* Bl

» Tennis is a sport in India-...only (when) people and the tennis associations start thinking that tennis is a job, an education and a full-time profession that the game can improve in this country.

—*Vijay Amritraj in* Weekend Review



» In a democracy...new sections of people are under a state of constant and unremitting competition for a place in the sun. The...government-owned media defeat the purpose of promoting the dyna ruler by over-exposure. To please every section he has to indulge in banalities. becomes a bore. From a bore to a political hack is a short road.

—*C.P. Ramachandran in* The Sunday Obser

» I have more experience than him (Farooq Abdullah). He is very young...I adv (him) just as any mother would her son.

—*Begum Abdullah in* Pro

» I never thought I was a good actress. I really can't act...I am always worried abo making grammatical mistakes. I go cold (before the camera) and my palms begin sweat.

—*Raakhee in* Filmfa

» No girl has offered to go to bed with me in return for a part (in a film). I wish would happen.

—*Manmohan Desai in* Gentlem

» I like females who are above thirty—ripe and who know the ways of the world, inexperienced youngsters.

—*Shashi Kapoor in* Stardu

» NTR is not the first—and will not be the last—political leader possessing a p mising potential to be led up the garden path by "chamchas" who force their patron attempt too much too soon.

—*N.C. Menon in* The Hindustan Ti

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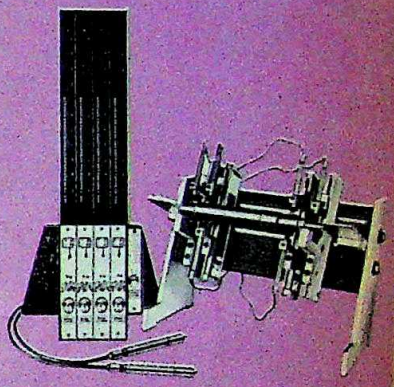

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JAMMU & KASHMIR ELECTIONS

Farooq's Fierce Fight

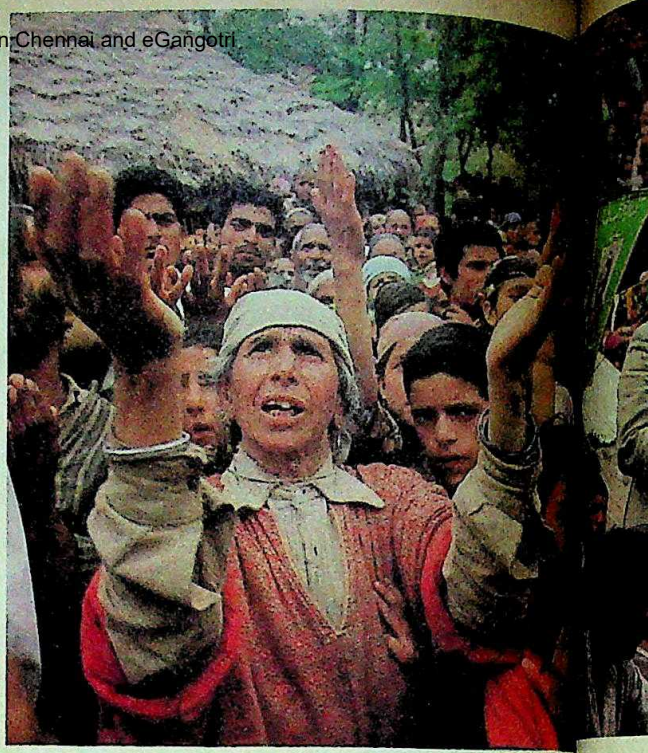
THE SHINY blue Matador lazes through what looks like an impenetrable cordon of humanity, bumping along dirt tracks that skirt the main roads leading to the Kashmir valley's farthest points—Anantnag, Baramulla, Sonamarg. Perched on top of the van, and balancing his 88 kg frame with a heavy trekker's stick, Farooq Abdullah, the dapper 46-year-old chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir, faces the first electoral challenge of his life.

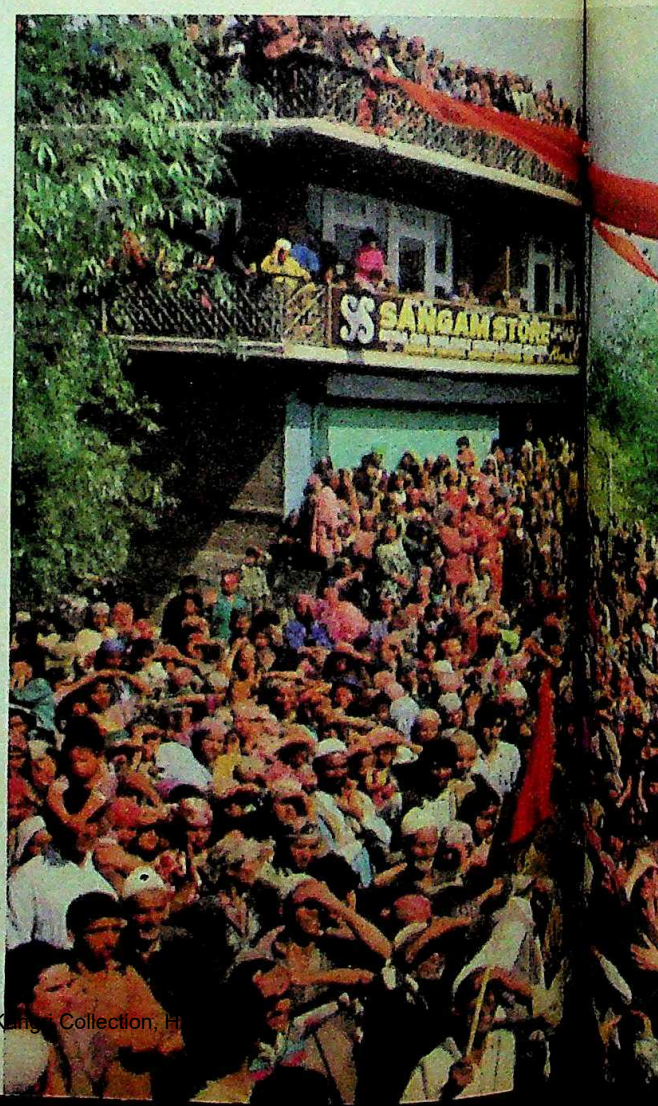
He dons a smartly cut 'Khan dress', his eyes framed by a pair of Ray-Ban sunglasses. Little peasant children trailing the motorcade sing in unison, chanting rhymes about the imminent doom of the Congress. Village women hold their babies aloft for Farooq to bless, youths do a frenetic jig barely a foot away from the van's windshield. Older people break into tears. Wiping the sweat off his brow with tissue papers, and commanding his men inside the van to raise or lower the volume of the amplifier by drumming the roof of the van with his stick, Farooq screams: "Vote *trawzi*... (Vote for)." The crowd screams: "... *alibaani* (the plough, his party's election symbol)."

For Farooq, the coming few days are crucial; for the future of the politics of Jammu & Kashmir, they are even more so. In 1977, with the Sheikh at the helm of affairs, and aided by veterans like the late Mirza Afzal Beg, the National Conference (NC) had won altogether 47 of the 76 seats in the state Assembly. Its tally: 39 of the 42 seats in Kashmir valley; seven of the 32 seats in Jammu; and one of the two seats in the Ladakh region. In 1983, it cannot afford to lose more than eight seats from its 1977 harvest. But the odds seemed to have piled up against the NC.

This means that the party will have to retain its grip on the valley, budging not an inch from its 1977 gains, and yet ensuring the victory of at least two or three candidates from other regions. This surely calls for a lot of luck as the Sheikh and Beg have left a void in the party which is yet to be filled. Farooq has inherited his father's chair, but not his aura. Nor is there any organiser in the party who can match Beg's ability and stamina. As the Congress(I) makes spirited forays into the state, with a determination unseen in the 18 years since its formation in the state in 1965, the NC fights with its back to the wall, relying almost entirely on sentiment.

Intense Campaign: Mass hysteria, melodrama, religious frenzy, arson, violence—the standard ingredients of electioneering in Kashmir were abundantly present last fortnight as the curtain was about to be drawn on the month-long campaign for polling in the state's 76 constituencies. Over 600 people had been injured in sporadic clashes throughout the valley and in stray scuffles in the Jammu region. Six persons had lost their lives. The office of the Jammu & Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (PCC-I) had been burnt down by miscreants widely believed to be NC zealots. And, again not without a feeling of *déjà vu*, old issues were being churned up—issues like Islam being in danger, or the big bad wolf of India





Kashmir's emotion-charged election scenario (clockwise from top left): pro-National Conference crowds greeting Farooq; Mufti Mohammed Sayed addressing the electorate; Mrs Gandhi in Jammu and Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah on his hectic campaign trail

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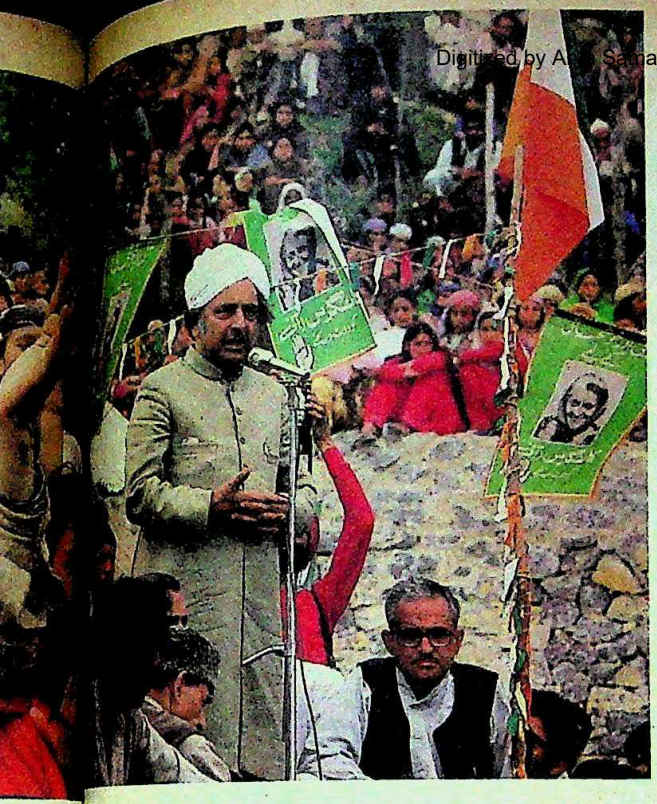

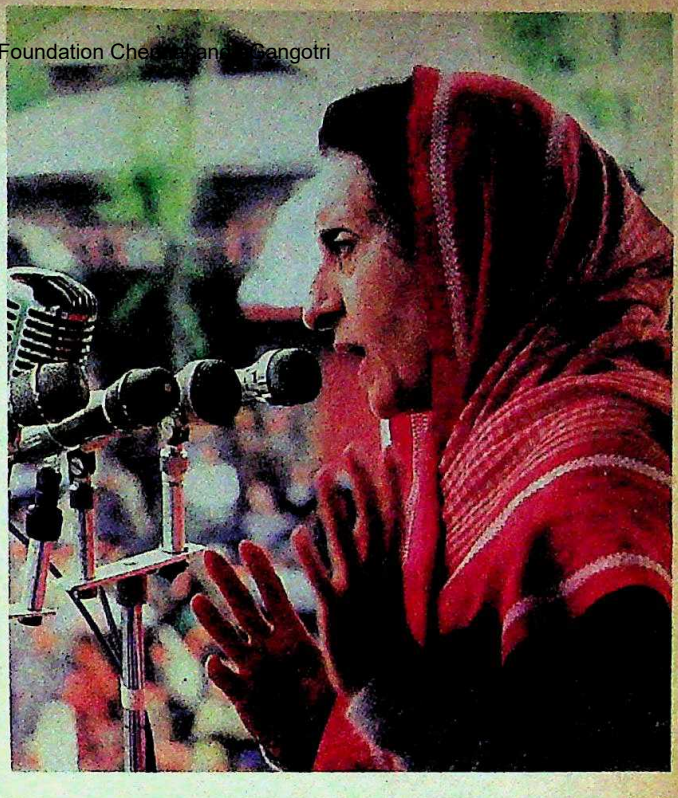

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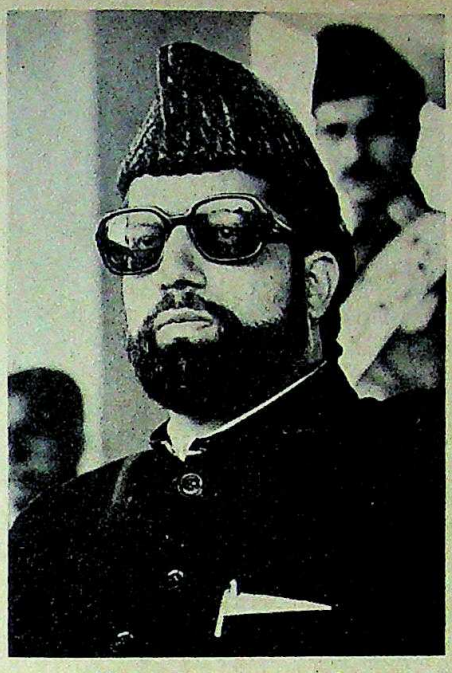
to rob Kashmir of its identity. None of these was really new. What was new to the scenario was the dogged made by Mrs Gandhi to bulldoze into the politics of Jammu & Kash- the bastion of NC and its founder, the -i-Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah. Cam- tirelessly for six days in the valley, making free use of military helicopters the government-controlled television Mrs Gandhi was treading a cam- trail that was almost as extensive as and drawing crowds that were im- by all reckoning. As the fortnight her candidates in Jammu appeared to a definite edge over those of the arch Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), not to of the NC which has only a token pre- in the 32 constituencies of the region. In the Kashmir valley, however, the and mystique of the Sheikh have worn thin. Nor is there any let-up in the adulation of Farooq as his father's successor. But, as the days advanced, were clear indications of more and discordant notes entering what would have been a nice, mel- one-party melody. On hand, the Jamaat-i-Isla- organisational prowess dated by seemingly unli- funds, was building up a of campaigning which it so far failed to achieve. On other, the Congress(I), for time since it cast itself as adversary to the NC in 1977, able to register a visible pre- in all the 42 constituencies valley.

Stronghold: In Srinagar however, the NC's hold was sweeping aside like a flood in the Jhelum all but traditional pockets of ance, such as the pandit- of Haba-Kadal, or the or five city constituencies by the followers of Farooq, the *mir-waiz* of mir. The moulvi is now an of the NC, having dropped on a 44-year-old history family feud with the Abdul- at a public rally in Srinagar fortnight. Again, the Hindu in Srinagar, about 12,000 together, are too thinly dis- over the constituencies matter at the hustings, to a recent delimitation electoral units.

A pro-NC bureaucrat in gar observes smugly: Kashmir valley is still very feudal in the sense that Lal Chowk (the central business district) holds the pulse of the entire valley. If there is an NC wave in Srinagar, have no doubts that the wave will lash the outermost reaches of Kashmir." Maybe it will: but never before has Kashmir witnessed such strident attempts by the Congress(I) to dislodge the NC from its pedestal. As the bureaucrat fumingly admitted: "The villages that never dared to put up Congress flags are now organising rallies and street-marches in support of the Congress."

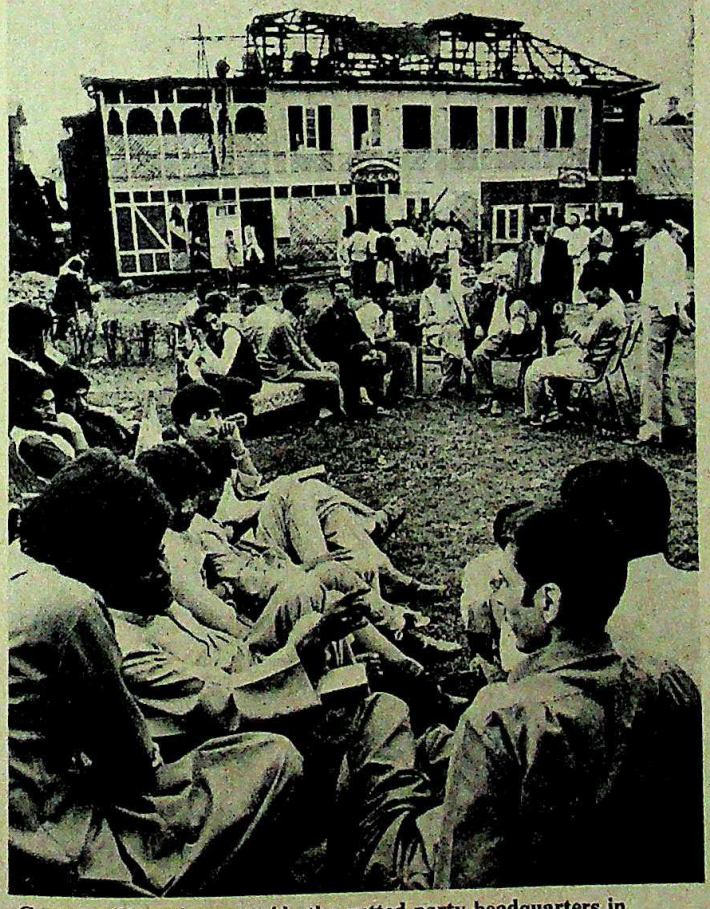


Moulvi Farooq: power play

On the other side of the snow-laden Banihal, in the Jammu region, from where the NC had managed to snatch seven seats in 1977 purely as a result of the division of votes between the Congress and the Janata Party, the prospects this time appear to be incredibly daunting. A distinct swing away from the BJP, then contesting the elections as the Janata, and towards the Congress(I) was noticeable even in the 1980 parliamentary elections when, in the Jammu parliamentary constituency, the Congress(I) candidate won in all but two of the 17 Assembly segments over his Janata rival. In 1977, Janata candidates had won in four of these constituencies and had tallied a much higher share of votes.

Crucial Test: Farooq is trying his best to make inroads into the Hindu-dominated plains and the Muslim-dominated uplands of Jammu, where the NC's influence is marginal. Last fortnight, he and his mother, the 63-year-old Begum Abdullah, began their campaign in Jammu. But even NC insiders admitted that the Congress had a decided edge over them as well as the BJP in most of the constituencies.

Farooq says he will seek another mandate from the people if he fails to win a clear majority. "This, in other words, means a referendum on who should rule Jammu & Kashmir: its own people, or the rulers of New Delhi functioning under the garb of President's rule," he says with gritted teeth. But old Kashmir hands in New Delhi and Srinagar are ready to lay any bet on the chances of the NC forming a government with Congress(I) support. "Mrs Gandhi has played her card coolly," says Ved Bhasin, editor of the *Kashmir Times*, the state's only English daily, "and Farooq is trapped. He can either go with an assortment of communal faces,



Congress(I) workers outside the gutted party headquarters in Srinagar: violent campaign

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or can go back to the Congress(I), with which he had perfect understanding until the other day."

Powerful Presence: For Kashmir, however, the portents are far more complex. Since the end of the maharaja's rule in 1947, the state tasted Congress rule for only a decade—between 1965 (when the J & K Congress was founded) and 1975, when the Sheikh was brought back to power following an accord with New Delhi. The NC, during this interregnum, as well as between 1953, when the Sheikh had been overthrown and detained, and 1965, boycotted the electoral process and kept its politics alive in the name of the Plebiscite Front, which is disbanded now.

Though the NC was out of power for 22 years, it always had a vital moral superiority over the Congress, whose image was simply that of a usurper. "The National Conference returns now," said the Sheikh in 1975, "like the sun re-emerging from behind a column of cloud. The cloud is unreal, but the sun is real."

This time round, what is actually in doubt is the "reality" of NC's self-projection as the only party entitled to rule the state. If Farooq decides to hobble on the crutches of the Congress(I), the NC's Messianic self-esteem goes to pieces. But it is this self-esteem that had prevented Kashmir, a Muslim-inhabited strategically located valley, from drifting towards the extremes of Islamic fundamentalism, of which there is no dearth across the "line of control". Says Mohammed Yusuf Taing, the scholarly secretary of the Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in Srinagar: "The NC is a bulwark against religious separatism. Those who are trying to weaken the bulwark are doing so at their own peril."

Changed Assessment: Taing and many others in the Kashmir valley who are prepared to think beyond the immediate elections, are inclined to believe that the determined Congress(I) bid to reduce the NC to a vassal role is the negation of Mrs Gandhi's own assessment of the Kashmir situation in 1975. In that year, though the NC did not have a single representative in the two houses of the state legislature, Mrs Gandhi installed the Sheikh as the state's chief minister after ordering Mir Qasim, the then Congress chief minister, to step down. She said at that time that it was "in the interest of Jammu & Kashmir" and "also in the interest of the country" that Sheikh Abdullah, "the natural leader of the people of the state", should be invited to rule.

Argues Mohammed Ashraf, p
writer and popular Urdu columnist:
Gandhi has clearly deviated from her
stand. She no longer believes that NC c
dependently be trusted with Jammu & K
mir without her having a grip on the lev
power. She is going back to the Indira
ception of Kashmir in 1953. This is a re
table development."

THIS shock and dismay are reflecte
the burgeoning poll clashes be
the supporters of the two parti
the valley. The most prominent of these
dents is the burning of the PCC(I) office
Maulana Azad Road in Srinagar on Ma
in broad daylight and despite about 400
cemen forming a cordon around the buil
besieged by an NC mob. Farooq was a
campaigning in Anantnag district on
day. When he heard the news, he prom
ordered a judicial inquiry. Nonetheless
hardly passed up an opportunity to refe
the incident in his election speeches, de
bing the Congress(I) workers as "c
hoodlums" who had set their own buil
on fire "to destroy the records of elec
funds". Talking to INDIA TODAY about
incident he fumed: "This is Reichstag

An NC campaign poster invokes the 'Sher-i-Kashmir' image

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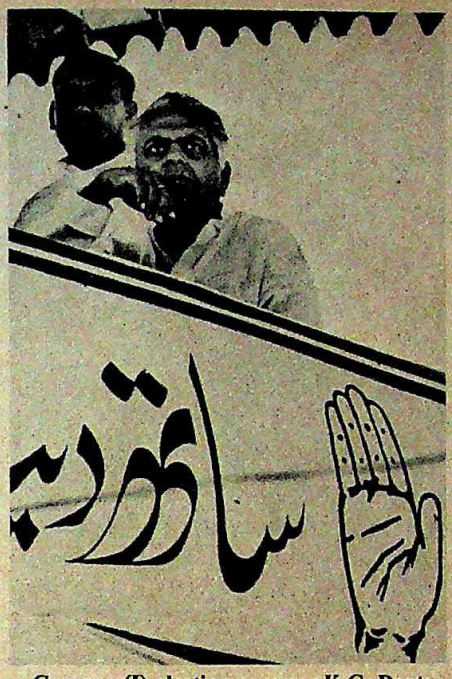
The attack on the PCC(I) headquarters
been mounted under the nose of the
station, with a milling crowd watching
blow by blow. It began when Mohammed
Qureshi, Congress(I) candidate for
Srinagar parliamentary constituency,
on holding a streetcorner meeting in
where the Election Commission had
banned electioneering in view of the
presence of tourists. According to eye-
witnesses, a group of NC activists belonging
to the Footpath Union (the body of stall-
holders illegally encroaching on pavements)
began stoning the building. They were later
joined by employees from the nearby
Secretariat. In the FIR, Qureshi, who himself
received bruises, mentioned 43 miscreants,
of whom 20 were identified as government
employees.

Yet, the theme of the NC song is that
Mohammed Qureshi who had "provoked the
mobs" by holding a meeting in an out-
of-bounds area, and that the arson was
committed by Congressmen themselves. Retorts
Qureshi: "Are we that mad to start a fire
when we are besieged in all directions? And
the meeting was not at all an election rally.
The slogans protesting against NC people not
allowing us to put up posters at Lal Chowk.
Anyway, since when did the NC become so
scrupulous about observance of election
rules?"

In fact, the current speeches and utter-
ances of NC leaders are a curious *mélange* of
humour and ire. Farooq, while recently in-
augurating the luxurious Shah Abbas Hotel,
overlooking the Dal, went to the extent of
suggesting that if the Centre did not provide
enough financial support to the state's entre-
preneurs he would directly seek aid from the
outside world. "This is patently absurd," said
Mohammed Arif Khan, Union minister of
state for agriculture and All India Congress
Committee-I (AICC-I) in charge of elections
in the Kashmir valley, "because no chief
minister can directly negotiate foreign aid
without the rules. This cheap populism is
unpardonable."

Financial Complaint: A typical example
of the NC's frenetic over-reaction is the
memorandum recently submitted to the Union
Finance Ministry by Pyarelal Handoo, a
Kashmiri pandit who is the state's law
minister, the NC candidate from the
Anantnag constituency and supposedly one
of Farooq's brains trust. Handoo, in his
18-page note, has juxtaposed statistics to
support his complaints about the Centre's
step-motherly treatment of Jammu &
Kashmir and to jibe at the Centre's own
Indiramania and financial inefficiency.
Said a Union government representa-
tive in Srinagar: "For some time now, every
note written by the J & K Government to
the Centre is reading more and more like a



Congress(I) election overseer K.C. Pant

political tract. One can only hope that this will prove to be a passing phase. But, at the moment, relations between the Centre and J & K are much worse than its relations with, say, West Bengal."

Ironically, it is only the internal development of the Congress(I) in Jammu & Kashmir that has peeved Farooq and his allies more than anything else. The most notable development is Mrs Gandhi's firm decision to instal as leader Mufti Mohammed Sayed, a consistent critic of the late Sheikh and ideologically opposed to him from the ground up. In 1975, when almost the entire cabinet of Mir Qasim marched into the Sheikh's government, Mufti was among the rare Congressmen who refused to join him.

Party Strongman: In contrast, Mir Qasim has all along been soft towards the Sheikh. This attitude, his inner-party critics never tire of repeating, is a legacy from his past days in 1948 when he served as personal assistant to Mirza Afzal Beg, then a minister and the Sheikh's right-hand man. Immediately after the elections were announced, Qasim was camping in New Delhi, fervently advocating the line of all-out support for the NC. However, Mrs Gandhi chose the line of confrontation with the NC and left no one in doubt that it would be Mufti, rather than Qasim, who would occupy the top post in the organisation. "How can Mrs Gandhi expect friendliness and cooperation from me with such a man (as Mufti) leading her party here?" fulminates Farooq as if he was discussing the affairs of his own party.

Just how serious the Congress(I) is about bludgeoning its way into the NC citadel is evident from the deployment of AICC(I) observers in the state. Krishna Chandra Pant, admitted into the Congress(I) recently after a long wait in the wings, is in overall command of the party's electioneering, and is jet-hopping between Srinagar and Delhi almost every week. Mohammed Arif Khan is in charge of the valley as well as the Ladakh region. Perched in his suite at Broadway Hotel, and armed with telephones fitted with scramblers, he commands the election machinery of his party in 44 constituencies, never addressing public meetings, never being visible, but firmly regulating the distribution of funds and personnel.

He also coordinates with Mohsina Kidwai, Union minister of state, and Begum Abida Ahmed, widow of the late Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, President of India. The two women were going out campaigning every day, addressing people, particularly the womenfolk, from door to door. In Jammu, the line of command is different, running through Ashok Gehlot, Union deputy minister, and Lokpati Tripathi, the Uttar Pradesh health minister, both put up at the Welcomgroup's Asia Jammu-Tawi, Jammu's best. The scrambler phones are there too.

Two other Congress(I) leaders, Ghulam Nabi Azad and Rajesh Pilot, had been sent out to far-flung areas of the Jammu region—Pilot to the Rajouri-Poonch area and Azad to the Muslim-dominated Doda district. There are marks of careful planning in the deployment Muslims in Muslim areas, and north Indian Hindus to fight the BJP on its own ground in Jammu. Said Pant: "We have taken all possibilities into account. It is childish to suggest, as some people have been suggesting, that we have given up the fight or that we are secretly in league with the NC."

Media Blitz: Today, next to Mrs Gandhi, it is Mufti who is being touted by the Congress(I) as the vote-grabber. Quarter-page advertisements, being inserted every day now in all important dailies of the state by the J&KPCC(I), include only a photograph of Mufti which, by itself, is a refreshing departure from the established Congress(I) practice of beginning and ending its media blitz with Mrs Gandhi. Mufti was also the only local leader to accompany Mrs Gandhi on board the helicopter on her campaign trail. The Congress(I) election posters, though printed in Delhi, still carry just as many photographs of Mufti as of Mrs Gandhi. At least in the state, the party is willing to soft-pedal its monolithic image. In rally after rally, Mrs Gandhi repeated the theme that the Congress in Kashmir is "an organisation

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of the local people and not of outsiders".

Although this ploy has not wholly mitigated the deep distrust the Kashmiris have for all outside parties, including the Congress, an impression has certainly been created that Congress rule, by itself, does not spell doom for the state's political and cultural integrity. In actual terms, integrity means the continuance of:

- ▶ the 'special status' of Jammu & Kashmir as guaranteed by Article 370 of the Constitution;
- ▶ generous Central assistance, next only to Nagaland in per capita terms;
- ▶ insulation of the state against aggressive economic onslaught from outside traders.

Nazir Ahmed: psychological warfare

Special Article: Today, even ordinary Kashmiris admit that the Congress(I) cannot ever muster enough courage to abolish Article 370, or to undermine the state's prerogatives in any way. Says Moulana Sad-ud-din, the amir (president) of the state Jamaat-i-Islami: "The Janata Party had threatened to abolish Article 370. When it came to power in 1977, it could not do so. Even the Congress cannot abolish Article 370. The whole of Kashmir will be in flames if it is ever attempted."

The NC also feels the same way, though it does not say so. Its wiliest electoral strategy is to pin the Congress(I) down to a position from where it cannot escape without hurting, or even purporting to hurt, the special powers of the state. The Resettlement Act of last year (INDIA TODAY, June 15, 1982) was just one such ruse, aimed entirely at pushing the Congress(I) to the wall. When the bill, popularly known as "Bill No. 9", was objected to by Governor B.K. Nehru, the NC was prompt in citing it as an example of the Centre trying to curb the state's special status. But Nehru, obviously at the Centre's instance, returned the bill to the two houses, though he could have sat on it till the dissolution of the Assembly this year, with which the bill would have become null and void.

This indeed cut half the ground from under the feet of the NC, which wanted to use it as the main plank of its election campaign. The other half was cut by Mrs Gandhi who avoided direct criticism of the Act in her election speeches and even agreed that "genuine cases" of permanent state subjects estranged from their hearth and homes should be sympathetically considered.

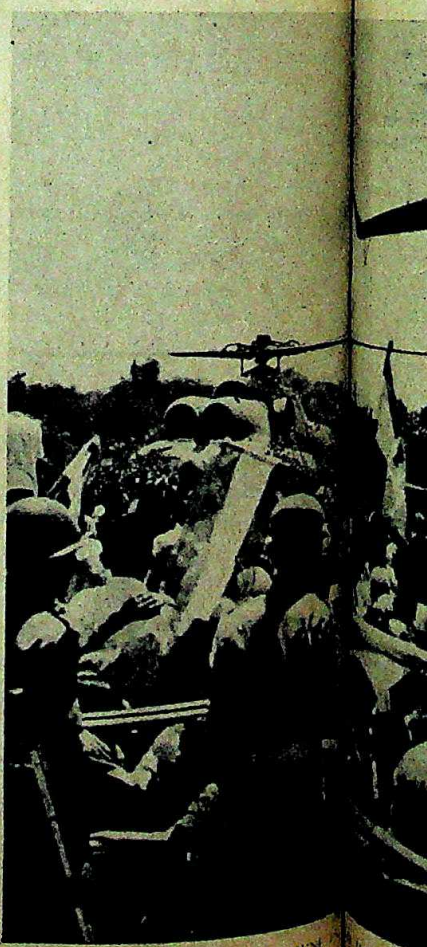
Hindu Anger: In Jammu, however, the profession of Kashmiri identity evokes a backlash which is as intense as the sentiments in favour of it in the valley. And it is the BJP that cashes in on it. The election manifesto of the BJP unambiguously wants the repeal of Article 370. Said Atal Behari Vajpayee, stomping through the 25 constituencies of Jammu where the BJP has set up its candidates: "Under the Resettlement Act, even Asghar Khan, the former Pakistani air force chief who had ordered the bombing of Jammu, can return to Kashmir and claim to be resettled, because he is a Kashmir state subject. But thousands of Hindu refugees who had crossed over into J & K from the other side of the border are still denied human rights. This is not Resettlement Act, this is replacement act."

The mood of the Jammu region, and particularly its Dogra people, is coloured by anger and frustration. And the smartest politician in Jammu to capitalise on this sentiment is Bhim Singh, president of the fledgling Panther Party, former MLA, relentless crusader against the Sheikh's rule, and bearded messiah of resurgent Dogra regionalism. Says Singh: "Though Jammu has nearly a half of the state's population, in 36 years the state did not have a single chief minister from Jammu, nor did it have a single chief secretary or a single director-general of police from the region. The Dogra rule over Kashmiris till 1947 might have been bad, but the Kashmiri rule over Dogras is no better."

The marks of suppression of Jammu are evident in the city itself which was once beautiful but is now a crumble of stucco with a maze of poorly maintained roads and hundreds of temple spires jutting into the sky as if to indicate that the city is indeed the last northern signpost of Hinduism. Its two tehsils, Bishnah and Ranabir Singh Pora, are the state's granary, growing nearly half of the entire foodgrains production in the state. Yet, the Jammu m... a smaller ration of foodgrain... his Kashmiri counterpart.

Discrimination: Nearly ... Jammu forms the eastern ... a long dry-belt extending ... Rawalpindi along the rain-... zone of the Shivaliks. Y... charge of canal irrigation ... rain-fed Kashmir valley is R... acre compared to Rs 12 p... in Jammu. Irrigation facilities ... tubewell projects is also fou... dearer in Jammu than in Ka... Of the 1,900 staff employed ... state Government, only 2... from Jammu. Although the ... tical records of the state G... ment are out of date, ... sources estimate that the ... tribution of development ... between Kashmir-Ladakh ... Jammu conform roughly to a 65:35 p...

There are also charges of discrimin... in admission to engineering and m... colleges in the state. It is well known th... Kashmiri Muslim student gets an unde... weightage in admissions, not to speak ... children of NC bigwigs being shown ... favours. Three separate writs again...



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procedures in the state's engineering
ical colleges are now pending before
reme Court. There are allegations of
students being blocked out of the
l institutions by manipulating the
, which accounts for 40 per cent of
marks. Said O. P. Kotwal, vice-
of Jammu University: "I would
ission to technical institutions to be
merit, keeping in mind the reserved
s. I would like admissions to be
conducted in a hush-hush manner,
list not notified and selection
sent individually to qualifying
s."

Jammu, Sheikh Abdullah was never
"In fact he was despised by the
for his authoritarian and sectarian
exhibited mostly in the post-1975
" says Trilochan Dutt, the septuagen-
Congress(I) candidate from the
Cantonment constituency who had
as a minister in the 1964 Sadiq cabinet
with Mir Qasim and the late D.P.

Careful Choices: The anti-Kashmiri
ent still runs high in Jammu. And the
aware of it. This time round, it has
ly chosen its candidates in Jammu,
into its fold months in advance
defectors from either the Congress(I) or the Janata Party with sizeable local followings. Many of the NC candidates in Jammu had in fact joined the party only this year. Squadron-Leader Rajinder Singh Chib, candidate from Ranabir Singh Pora, was admitted into the party in January. Gurbachan Kumari, NC candidate from Bari-Brahmana, defected from the Janata Party early this year.

Farooq is hoping the local factors to work in his favour in Jammu this time. Of his seven Cabinet ministers, three are from Jammu, and three are Hindus—a fact which he often points out in his speeches. Recently, Farooq visited the famed Vaishno Devi Temple of Jammu, and went around sporting a *tilak* on his forehead. His well-publicised meeting with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale at the Golden Temple in Amritsar was also aimed at wooing the state's Sikh voters who number over a lakh, 80 per cent of them living in Jammu.

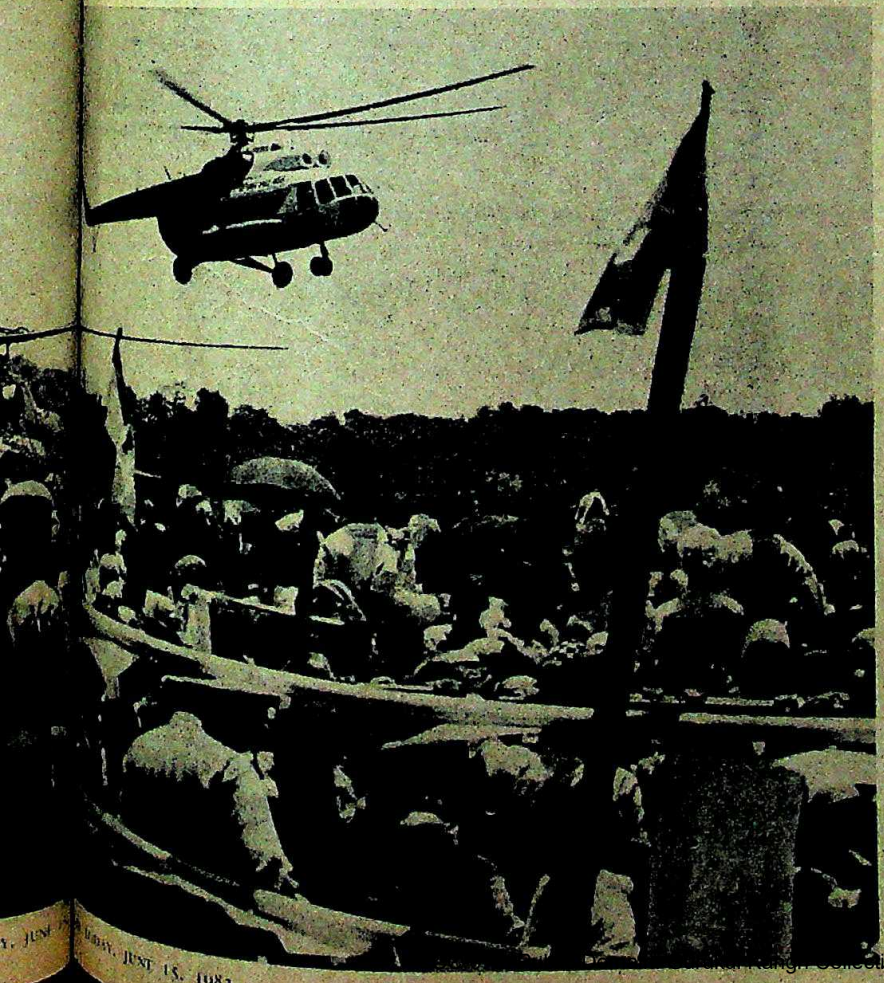
It is yet to be seen if this gambit pays off in Jammu. Nor is it clear if NC's subtle Islamic appeal will cut ice with the predominantly Muslim voters of the border district of Jammu, such as Rajouri, Poonch and Doda. The Muslims there are as diversified as the Hindus, cut up into pockets of Gujjar, Bakarwal and Rajput communities, with a sprinkling of Kashmiri Muslims along the southern slope of the hills. The NC is seen by the non-Kashmiri communities as a purely Kashmir phenomenon. Added to that is the factor of Pir Mian Bashir, a redoubtable Gujjar leader of the state, having defected from the NC to the Congress(I) this time. Bashir is now a Congress(I) candidate.

Gujjar Factor: Exuding optimism, and brushing all doubts aside with a fluent shrug, said Sheikh Nazir Ahmed, NC general secretary and the Sheikh's nephew: "The Gujjar factor will work on our side rather than theirs (the Congress) when *madre-meherban* Begum Abdullah reaches the Gujjars. We shall win not by the force of arithmetic but by the power of psychology. The people of the state love the Sheikh and his memory, they don't love the Congress(I). And that is the basic difference." The basis of Nazir's hope is that the Begum, whose mother was a Gujjar, will pull in their support, apart from being able to generally keep the memory of the Sheikh alive among the people.

But, at 63, the Begum is no longer a tireless bundle of energy. Her memory for dates and names is no longer particularly reliable. Moreover, as Trilochan Dutt pointed out, "a lot of people associate the excesses of the Sheikh's post-1975 rule with the Begum." It is well known that the Skeikh kept indifferent health during his last years, and that the Begum threw her weight about quite a bit in that period.

Talking to INDIA TODAY, the Begum was on a memory trip, groping for dates but sticking painstakingly to her theme that "there is a great similarity between Farooq and his father at that age", and that "the mantle of Sher-i-Kashmir has automatically fallen on him". She fumed at the "Kashmir people now close to Mrs Gandhi" for having misled her into a path of confrontation. She named them as Vijay Dhar, D. P. Dhar's son and Rajiv Gandhi's friend, M. L. Fotedar, Mrs Gandhi's political secretary, and Qureshi as the "most vicious" among them, "not to speak of Mufti", of course.

However, the essence of her involvement in the campaign may be just a signal to those among the NC workers who had been in doubt whether the Begum really supported Farooq. There is an undercurrent of feeling in Kashmir that the mother was really on the side of her son-in-law, G.M. Shah, who withdrew himself from politics last year. Still, seven of his die-hard followers have got NC tickets, apparently at the Begum's insistence. Speculations are rife as to what they would do in the event of Farooq obtaining a



Mrs Gandhi's barnstorming helicopter tour: jet-age politics

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razor-thin majority. The Begum brushed it aside, saying that "ours is one family". But, will Shah stage a come-back? The Begum gently reminded that "Mr Shah has not resigned from the central executive of the NC; the question will arise only if he does".

WHILE the Shah episode still casts its shadow on the party, its leaders feel confident about the image of the Government it has provided in the past six years. They hope that the party's organisational weaknesses will be neutralised by the Government's performance, smugly rated as "excellent" by Farooq himself.

In the past six years, the only change that NC could carry out was the institution of a "single-line administration", following which incentive for development arose from the district level instead of filtering down from the top. The Sheikh had the district magistrates redesignated as district development commissioners, and put them at the top of the newly-formed district development boards, controlling vast funds for development. The other members of the board are the MLA's, MLC's and the MP of the locality, the sarpanches, and a few nominated members who are invariably NC cronies.

The plan outlay was thus divided into two components: the district component and the state component. This year, 46 per cent of the Rs 185-crore plan outlay will be distributed through these quasi-political bodies with bureaucrats as figureheads but politicians taking the cream. The boards are in fact riddled with corruption, and the funds are mainly spent with political ends in view. There is no large industry worth the mention in the state, except the watch factory of the public sector Hindustan Machine Tools in Srinagar. Power generation capacity in the state is a measly 200 mw with a winter shortfall of 50 mw.

Steady Improvement: While the Government's efforts for development have been sketchy (allegedly due to the Centre's indifference), the overall condition of the people has steadily improved, thanks to the phenomenal growth of two sectors in the past decade: the handicraft industry (turnover last year: Rs 70 crore) and horticulture (turnover: Rs 165 crore). With the tourism revenue (5 lakh tourists last year, including 45,000 foreign tourists) added to it, the affluence of the people in the valley now shows everywhere.

Gone is the sobering sight of pot-bellied children in the countrysides. There are only 50,000 people in the live regi... the state's employment exchange (as ... a population of 60 lakh), and 75 per ... them are in Jammu. A carpenter in S... today charges a daily wage of Rs 45, a... it. Kashmiri workers are simply not ... construction sites, where the labour ... predominantly Bihari or Oriya, as is t... in the Punjab today. The 'apple k... Baramulla drive 100 km to Srinagar ... second day to dine at five star hotels.

The opulence has bred a hunger ... development. When the Cabinet meets ... every year in each district, which is ... tomary, the ministers and bureaucrats ... grilled by the local people for mo... everything: more roads, more schools, ... hospital beds. The aspirations rise, a... does frustration. "I want to put my me... glass house," the Sheikh used to say. By ... most of his men are living behind shat... glasses, with the shards viciously flying ... their faces. "There is a limit to relying p... on sentiment," said Arif Khan, "be... which the law of diminishing returns ... and people demand results." The NC is ... finding it tough to cope with the ... changes that have conspicuously set in.

Islamic Bogey: Farooq and his ... patriots may still try to derive addi...

Kashmir villagers welcome Farooq: enduring charisma

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room by leaning on the side of Islam. historically, religious intolerance and have never struck roots in Kashmir Islam, introduced only 600 years ago, been coloured by Hindu Shaivism and of Sufism. Ironically, Islam entered Kashmir valley not in the wake of conquests but by the people's free Syed Ali Hamadani, the 14th century and scholar responsible for almost conversion in the valley, brought along him not troops but only 600 preachers. The now-popular Arabic and Pakistani of Islamic fundamentalism, upheld Jamaat-i-Islami and religious leaders like mir-waiz Moulvi Farooq, are alien to the of Kashmir. The NC still represents the secular culture of Kashmir. Its main is "Hindu, Muslim, Sikh *ittehad*". If pushed against the wall, the party may embrace the same communalist forces which it tried to steer clear so far. The between the *mir-waiz*, who now Kashmir's accession, and Farooq ominous pointer in this direction.

Alternatives: In fact Farooq's brief ca- politics has reached a crossroads in its first year. A lot still depends on which the cookies crumble at the hustings, and the post-election alliances emerge. The 'Islam-pasand' groups such as the Jamaat and the fiercely regionalistic People's Conference (contesting every seat in the valley) will no doubt offer the NC their slender but crucial support in the hope of driving Kashmir politics away from a secular path. Then the Congress(I), as a national party, will lose both the battle and the war.

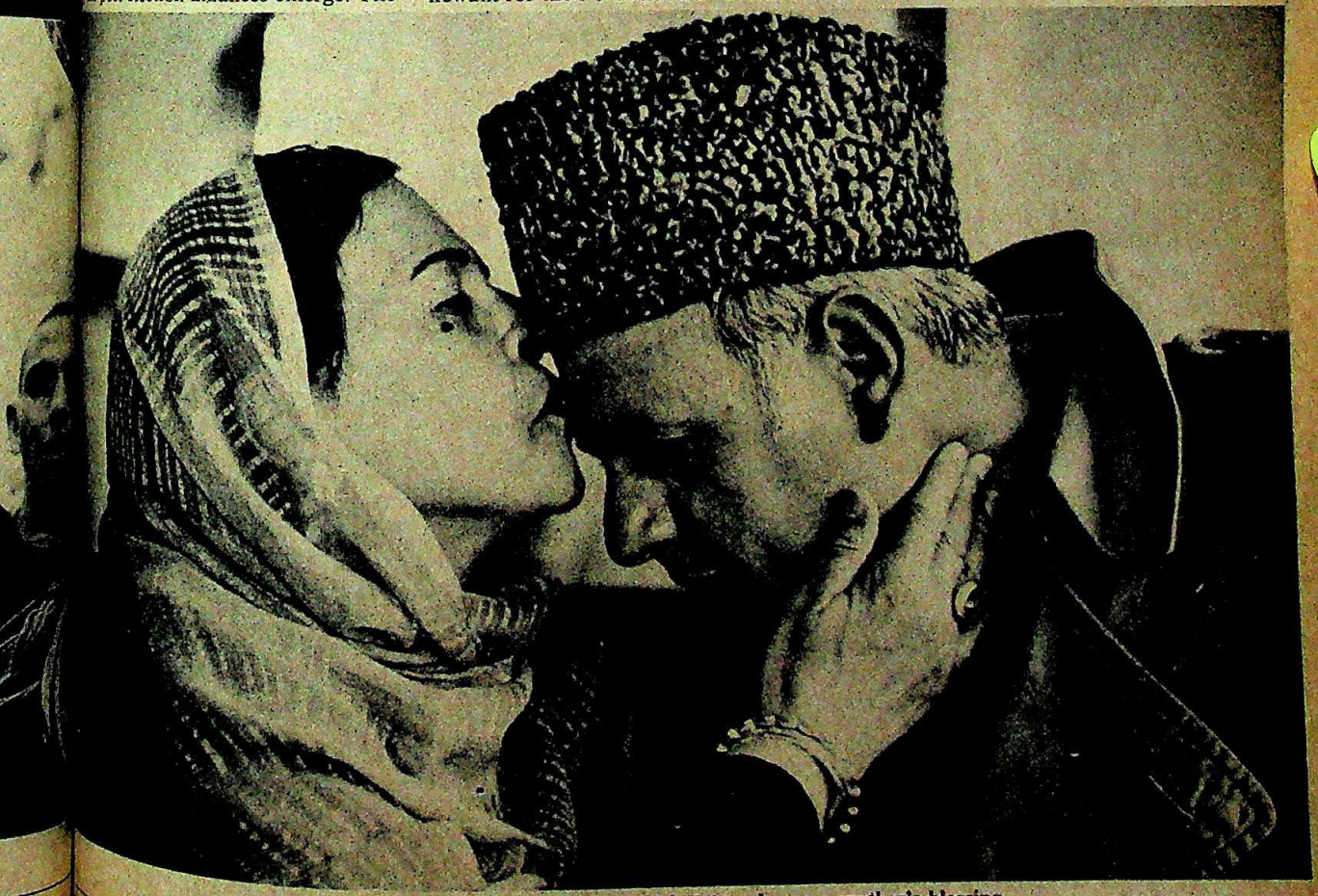
The alternative is the BJP, with its haul of half-a-dozen or so seats, shoring up the NC. It surely works to the BJP's advantage in the long run, giving at least one visible confirmation of its recent secular protestations. But it will boomerang on the NC, upsetting the delicate balance between religion and secularism that it has achieved in the 44 years of its history. "How can we go into an alliance with a communal party?" questioned Nazir.

The only option for the NC is to cross the 39-seat hump on its own steam, without resting its weight on the shoulders of the Congress(I) or any other party. "Inshallah, exactly this will happen," Farooq exclaims. But can Mrs Gandhi afford the risk of allowing Farooq the time to grow and blossom into another Sher-i-Kashmir?

Acid Test: Right now, she is fighting the elections pulling out all her stops. A cakewalk for the NC means the vindication of the charge that she is no longer capable of stemming the tide of regionalism. The charge has been echoing ever since her debacle in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh early this year, and it is the issue of regionalism which will most certainly dominate the general elections due in 1985. For her, obliteration from Kashmir is too high a risk right now.

Then, she must also re-confirm her much-touted hold on the Muslim mind, which has by all reckoning slackened over the years. Last year, 40 Muslim MP's, including those from her own party, met her and expressed their misgivings about the shape of things. Her governments have failed to curb communal strife in Moradabad, Meerut, Baroda. Even in Delhi, where, ironically, Farooq campaigned for the Congress(I) in the municipal polls, Muslims voted against the party in the walled city. And, as Farooq himself now says, "the Assam killings are bound to have repercussions. The Muslims are shocked beyond belief."

For Mrs Gandhi, the elections are a litmus test for her bonafides as a secular leader and a stong unitarist who can keep fissiparous tendencies on a leash. For Farooq, the cub in the top seat of the state, this is the first and the last chance to grow into lionhood. —SUMIT MITRA in Srinagar



An affectionate moment for Begum Abdullah and son: a mother's blessing

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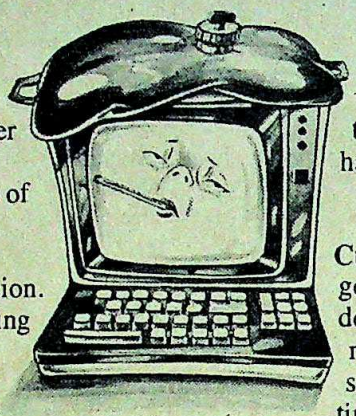
A MINICOMPUTER BUYER WHO DOESN'T ASK THESE VITAL QUESTIONS MIGHT NEVER GET THE RIGHT ANSWERS.



The decision to invest in a minicomputer is not taken overnight, but after a great deal of thought. Likewise, the selection of the right computer requires the same mature thought, and the same detailed searching to arrive at the correct decision. There's no dearth of companies offering minicomputers that claim to have all the answers, to provide all the solutions. Not all of them can live up to their claims. The buyer's greatest safety lies in addressing this list of questions to every prospective supplier — vital questions which, if answered satisfactorily, will establish the quality of the product, the credentials of the company that sells it, and the sincerity of the service that backs it.

Q1

Manufacturing facilities: Do you have adequate manufacturing facilities to deliver reliable products on time? Or are you merely importing computers c.k.d., and assembling them? More important, will you be producing the necessary spares on a regular basis for the next five years, and beyond that? Or are you selling computers that are already obsolete abroad?

ICIM 101 is a part of ICIM's manufacturing programme. ICIM's Pune factory is one of India's largest, most comprehensive and most modern. You are assured of continuity of the product line and spares.

Q2

Documentation: Are you organised to provide suitable documentation to support your product? Is it comprehensible to the user, is it exhaustive, and up-to-date?

ICIM 101 like all ICIM products, is supported by thorough documentation that is clearly comprehensible, exhaustive and regularly updated to reflect every improvement in hardware and software.

Q3

Customer Engineering Services: Are you geared for CES support? Promises aside, do you have engineers resident within a radius that makes possible the necessary support within a reasonable response time? Do you have spares stocked within reasonable distance from the installation?

ICIM gives you the security of 87 resident service locations with a ratio better than 1 engineer per 2 installations. Requisite spares are maintained at each service point. It is, in no uncertain terms, one of India's largest computer service organisations and ICIM 101 is backed by this network.

Q4

Promises and practice: Everyone makes promises. What's your record on delivery: how often, how soon? Do you have ready software, or is it forever 'being developed'?

ICIM 101 is supported by a range of ready software. You get it the day you get your ICIM 101. It's up and ready, and immediately productive. Should you require a special non-standard package, we'll give you a definite delivery date — and keep it.

Q5

Development and Quality Assurance: Is your hardware and software thoroughly tried and tested — first internally, and then at customer sites, — before it is released for general use? Have you safeguarded against recurrent trouble, down time and lost productivity through an established test programme? Or is your software merely bought out?

ICIM 101 gives you this assurance. The hardware has been tried and proven internally, through rigorous

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...grammes, and confirmed in-use, with more than ...0 successful installations over the past one year. ...ftware is developed and tried internally, either at ICIM, or the Company's U.K. associate, ICL. You ...n be sure you're not part of anyone's test ...gramme.

Q6

Education and training: Do you really know your own product and software? Will you take the responsibility for training my people to get the most out of it?

ICIM gives you a range of tried, tested and proven machines and software, developed by ICIM or its U.K. associate, ICL. Part of our total computer service is training your people to exploit the full potential of the machine or the software.

Q7

Understanding my business: Are the packages you sell me supported by people who are knowledgeable in the application, to give me the skilled support I need to use it?

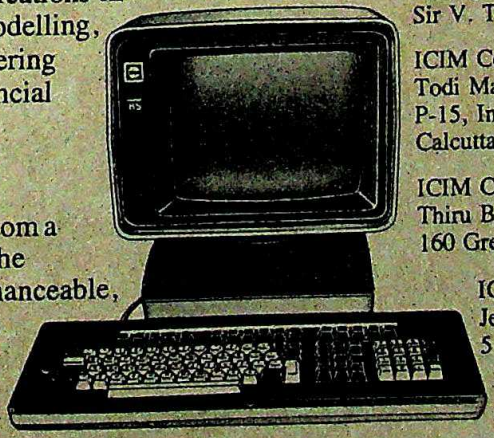
ICIM software comes to you from the people who know what it's all about. It is developed by professionals with a thorough insight into the actual working of every aspect of business and industry. ICIM personnel are supporting applications in production planning, econometric modelling, manpower skills, education, engineering design, operations research and financial planning, to name just a few.

Q8

Long-term strategy: I want to buy from a supplier I'll be happy to stay with in the foreseeable future. Is your system enhanceable, or will I have to add another? Can you offer me future compatible growth in terms of hardware/software and systems? When I need to move up, can you supply the required system? Will it be compatible with the software I've been using? Or will I need another set of software?

ICIM 101 comes from a company with an established record, and a planned future. The ICIM 101 you buy today can continue to grow with your business. If you ever need to move up, rest assured that compatibility — of hardware, software and systems — is built in. And all ICIM systems speak a common language.

Eight vital questions. ICIM 101 has answered, with honesty and quiet pride. Address these questions to prospective suppliers. The answers will help you choose between a wise investment and a white elephant.



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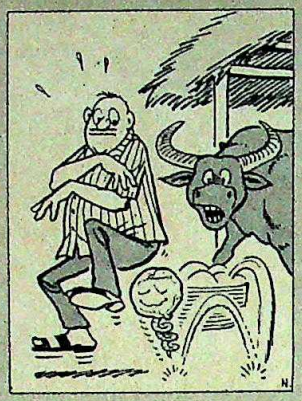
SNAKE SAMBA



■ Cabbages are not very striking vegetables. However, even this humble vegetable can spring surprises, as an octroi inspector of Moradabad found out recently.

He had bought a basketful of cabbages for his buffalo, one of those strong, silent creatures who have little use for anything less than a basketful. Lugging his purchase home, he laid the basket before its suspicious snout. But before the animal could begin to partake of its meal, one of the cabbages suddenly went into convulsions.

In no time at all, a sizeable crowd gathered to watch the cabbage doing its version of the foxtrot. Even the strong, silent buffalo broke its vow of silence and grunted in astonishment. As for the vegetable, it hopped out of the basket and did a particularly elegant whirl round the inspector and his buffalo sing both to mutter and prayers against evil spir

The truth was more dane. After a few minute the dance, a snake leapt o the cabbage and slith away through leaping le safety. It had appare sought shelter in the cool nery but had decided to m to safer pastures when the hungry snout of the bu made its preliminary fo into the cabbage.

WOMEN-AT-ARMS

■ It was a confrontation that could have been labelled Tradition vs Enlightenment. At a crossing in south Calcutta last fortnight, a group of lady teachers from a well-known school in the area was stopped in its tracks by another group of women who looked as if they were going to take on the anti-Christ single-handed. What they were aiming at, however, was something no less horrendous: the bare arms left uncovered by the sleeveless blouses of the teachers. In no uncertain terms, they told the teachers, in the name of the Amra Bangali movement, to wear clothes that adequately covered their skin, and not to go about looking as if they were taking a crash course in debauchery.

Anybody who has accosted a schoolteacher knows what a dangerous venture this can be. With their reflexes honed through years of dodging paper planes in class, t teachers took up the att stance in karate and told t Amra Bangali light brigad that they had no right to inte fere in such a question and that India was not Pakistan Taken aback by this firm re jection of their demand, th Amra Bangali troupe retre ted, not, however, without threatening to pour ink on a arms which were not virtuou ly covered. But teachers sh rugged contemptuously and walked away.

WOLF TRAP

■ Future Shock: a wolf of the human kind is prowling the Mall in Simla in search of prey. He sees a particularly attractive specimen sauntering along, and immediately licks his chops in anticipation of a meal already consumed. Sidling up to the lady, he starts off with his litany of sweet nothings. The girl listens to him for a while, simpering under the onslaught. But then, her eyes turn into chips of steel, she produces a whistle from somewhere and from Little Red Riding Hood turns into Black Magic Woman. Her sinister acolytes, disguised as police officers, lay unrelenting palms on the wolf who is led away to the police station. The lady slinks off to trap another victim.

This scenario will be played in Simla when the new plan of the police to purg the fashionable Mall an Ridge areas of eve-teasers goes into effect. The lynchpi of the strategy is a woma constable looking like a woman constable has ev looked before. And, within few days, according to the p lice, the area will also be w ched by close-circuit televis cameras to detect the be nings of a wolf whistle and it in the bud.

DIRTY TRICK

■ Over the years, enterprising men have developed a number of ways to part the fool from his money. From promising him a pot of gold if he'd just led them hold his bag for a few minutes, to producing 'gold' ornaments out of a lump of dough, people have seen and fallen for them all. But one really curious case comes from Bangalore, where a young man fell prey to a two-man team last fortnight.

The young man was carrying a bag containing Rs 5,000 or so and was going to deposit it in an office. Two men stopped him on the road and told him that there was dirt on his shirt. He thanked them and wiped away the dirt with his handkerchief. Later, he went inside an office and what does he see there but the same two men with more anxious queries about the dir his shirt and would he some help in removing it looked and looked at his less white shirt, decided he suddenly been struck b and said yes, you can clea shirt if you really think it that dirty. One of the me fered to hold his bag whi other went to work wit handkerchief—and that the last the young man saw of the bag or the m

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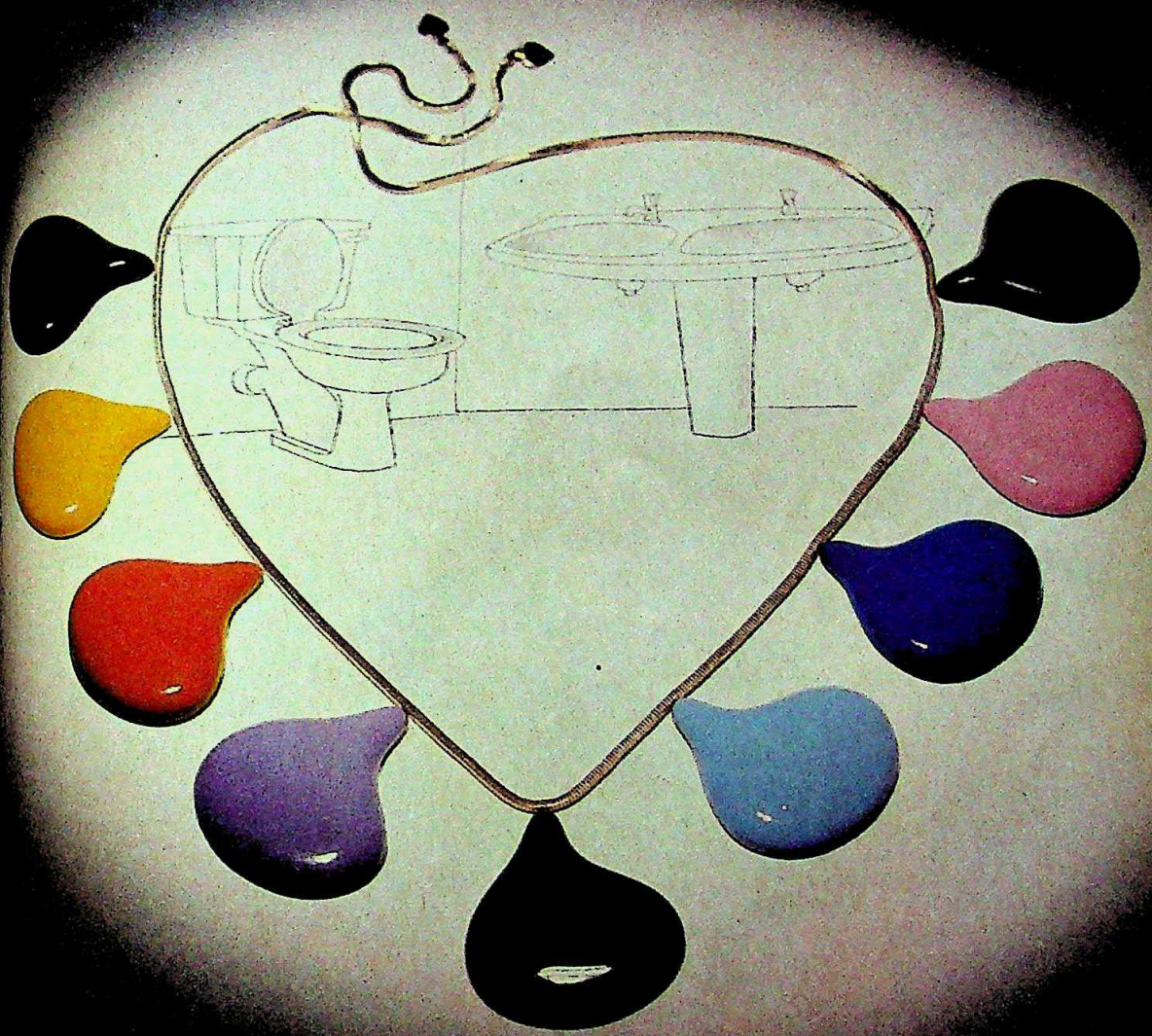
What the well-dressed bathroom is wearing...



Neycer

In 20 jewel colours

Beauty in your bathroom, beauty that lasts.

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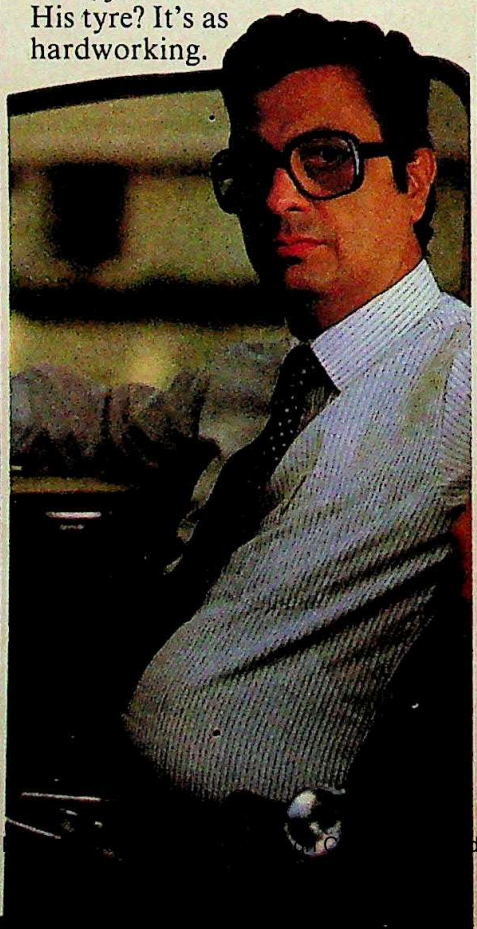
Retired Brigadier Rao. Busy Dr Bakshi. Trendy Mr Tandon. They all go different ways...

Retired Brigadier Rao

His 1960 model is still in fine fettle. Runs him to the Golf Club in the morning, to friends for a hand of bridge in the evening. In between, there's the occasional visit to the doctor and dropping Mrs Rao at her welfare meeting every Wednesday. His tyre? Like his car, it must be a faithful companion.

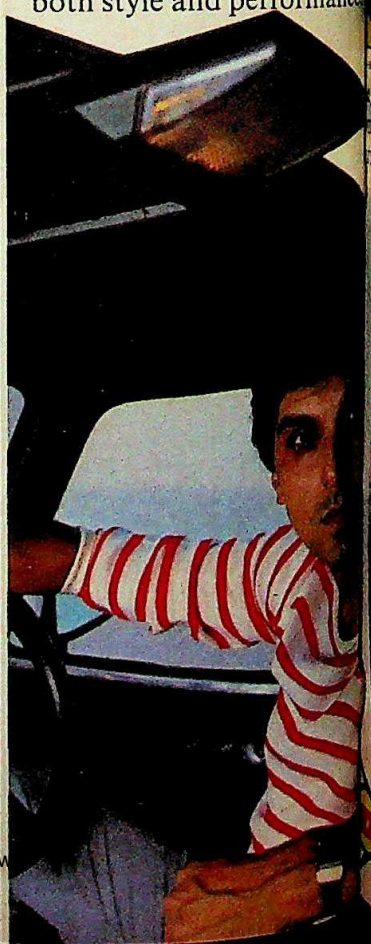
Busy Dr Bakshi

Always on the move. 7 am yoga classes; 8.15 am children to school; 8.30 am chamber; 10.30 am classes at the Medical College; 1 pm home for lunch; 2 pm visits to patients; 3.30 pm children from school; 5 pm chamber; 8 pm Club... and, of course, emergency calls anytime—day or night. And if you think Dr Bakshi works hard, just think about his car! His tyre? It's as hardworking.



Trendy Mr Tandon

8-track stereo, bucket seats, real leather upholstery, wrap-around rear view mirror... this car has it all. And whether it's driving Mr Tandon to his factory 40 from the city or dropping his wife off at the charity premi of the latest Shyam Benegal film, it spells just one thing class. His tyre? The best of both style and performance.



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NLOP C49 (HI-P)

The faithful companion. HI-P (High Performance) er compound in the C49 es the rubber much stronger helps the tread to resist sion. HI-P also gives the muscle for stronger road grip, smoother acceleration and surer braking—even in emergencies. All of this adds up to a that gives you your ey's worth for years and

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The workhorse. With a Premium Depth Tread which has more rubber on the tread and, therefore, gives more tyre

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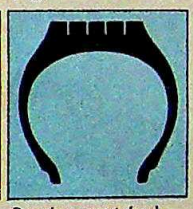

Premium tread depth

life. A special nylon casing promises both strength and stamina. And a superior tread compound, based on a new manufacturing concept, builds in highest abrasion-resistance. The Super Star. In the long run, it costs less.

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The stylish performer. With the latest in tyre technology and design adapted to Indian cars, Indian roads. Specially developed fabric belt and nylon casing give greater comfort, greater reliability and higher car suspension life. And the unique Aquajet system helps it to run dry on wet roads. The SP Sport Radial. The No.1—in style and performance.

Special fabric belting

Unique Aquajets

DUNLOP A tyre for every need

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You gave her a diamond because it was precious.

Now, give your face the same.

Erasmic Supreme.
The blade with the diamond edge that captures the essence of closeness.
Telling you that you're precious and that it cares for your face.
Erasmic Supreme.
Crafted to the minutest detail, tempered, ground and honed to perfection, polished and finally Teflon coated for a flawless finish.
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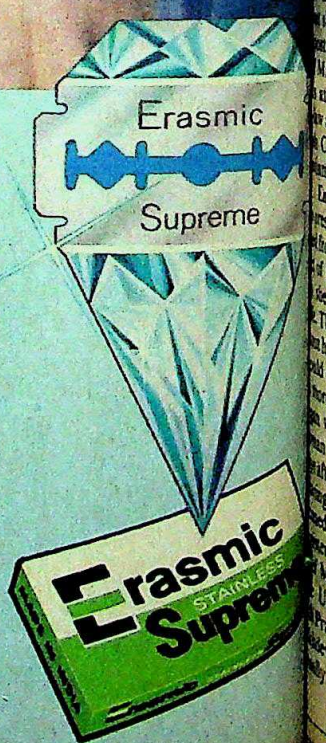

Erasmic Supreme

The blade with the diamond edge.

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LINTAS (D) ESM

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...GANDHIS

...n Indoor Plant?

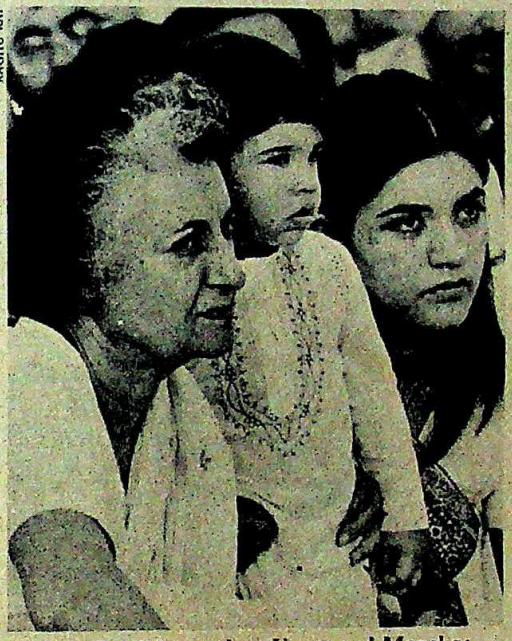
...OR ALL her shrill and cryptic pro-...ouncements about "foreign hands" ...d "outside forces" behind every na-...crisis from Assam to the Punjab tang-...Gandhi's status as prime minister has ...been enough to ensure that her theo-...re not entirely disbelieved. Last fort-...however, the vital edge of credibility ...Gandhi enjoyed was drastically curtai-...following an interview she gave to the ...-based Saudi Arabian daily, *Arab* ...

...a statement that raised more than ...eyebrows, Mrs Gandhi made some ...and for someone of her position, ...creet allegations regarding her recal-...t daughter-in-law, Maneka. Laun-...g into a bitter and by now familiar ...ribe against Maneka she made the in-...ble remark that Maneka had been ...d in the prime minister's house by ...es" from the very start. "This whole ...g has been planned from the begin-..." she charged.

...Press reaction, expectedly, was ...ediate and negative. The normally ...ethetic *Times of India* was moved to ...ment in an editorial that "Mrs ...dhi is not known to make such ...s charges casually...she can be ...e and confused on purpose. But the ...other option open to us is to take the ...that Mrs Gandhi does not mean ...she has said...." That would have ...ost certainly been the general reaction ...Mrs Gandhi not extended her queru-...s attempts to discredit her daughter-...w at a later meeting of the Uttar Pra-...Congress(I) executive committee and ...amentary board in Lucknow.

...motional Diatribe: According to sour-...present at the meeting, Mrs Gandhi swit-...from a discussion on Punjab to the sub-...of her estranged daughter-in-law. San-...she said, had strained relations with his ...Those who knew Sanjay and the facts ...his relations with his wife, she pleaded, ...ld come out with them, because it was ...more a family matter. Maneka, she said, ...wearing the clothes of a *suhagan* (a ...man whose husband is alive) within 10 ...after Sanjay's death. "I objected to her ...ing clothes of a *suhagan*," she told the ...ed meeting, which included most of the ...ers of the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet and ...Minister Sripat Mishra. Also present ...Union Commerce Minister Vishwa-...Pratap Singh and the UPCC(I) President ...dev Prasad. Mrs Gandhi was so emo-...ly upset that at one stage she broke down and tears began to trickle down her cheeks.

Maneka was not the one to take all this lying down. She hit back two days later with a devastating written statement. "The prime minister is herself a widow," Maneka said, "and she should know that one of the things that Mahatma Gandhi worked for was that widows should be treated and allowed to live normally. It does not behove her to make statements that will set the movement for the emancipation of widows back by a century." If past experience is any gauge, a statement like that made by Mrs Gandhi is normally regarded by Congressmen to mean that open season has been declared on Maneka and a concerted campaign must surely follow.


RAGHU RAI

Mrs Gandhi, grandson Varun and Maneka: unseemly squabble

Unfortunately, it also gave a grateful Maneka ample ammunition to retaliate in her own inimitable style—a style which, ironically enough, she has learned from the best teacher in the land—and to earn some bonus sympathy points. In a caustic written statement to the press, Maneka said: "I can only conclude from her (Mrs Gandhi's) statements that with advancing age and an erratic memory, she is suffering from great mental strain. It is not in the interest of the country to have an unwell prime minister. Therefore, I offer her my best wishes for a speedy and complete recovery."

Justifications: The round was obviously Maneka's and Mrs Gandhi was quick to realise the fact and at least made an attempt at sounding contrite. While electioneering in Kashmir, she told reporters that she had been misquoted and the word "planted" used in a local reproduction of the interview had not been used by her. She was right but not to the extent that it made much difference.

In the news agency report of the interview reproduced in the media the controversial sentence read: "She (Maneka) obviously was planted there by some forces from the very beginning." In the original *Arab News* interview, the phrase had read: "She obviously was put there by some forces from the very beginning." But that hardly reduced the serious nature of the charge. When contacted, in Jeddah, the interviewer, Farouk Luqman, managing editor of *Arab News*, confirmed to INDIA TODAY that the interview had been tape-recorded. "The interview was held at Mrs Gandhi's parliament office in the presence of her information adviser, Sharada Prasad, Najma Heptullah, MP, and a stenographer from the parliamentary pool who recorded the interview on tape, then transcribed it in my hotel room in my presence giving me the original and retaining the copy. The interview was published in full as it was recorded," says Luqman, who also confirmed that the phrase Mrs Gandhi had used was "put there by some forces".

But that was hardly the issue. More important, it failed to take away from the fact that, for a person of her position, Mrs Gandhi's remarks were highly unseemly and ill-timed. As columnist Sunanda K. Datta-Ray commented in *The Statesman*: "She (Maneka) is far from being the nation's first concern. Mrs Gandhi is ...that such eminence should be entangled in unseemly squabbles of an all too mundane nature cannot but cause dismay. India is in turmoil while our prime minister expends her energy in making indiscreet remarks...."

The *Indian Express* was more scathing in its editorial remarks. "..the conspiracy theory is so utterly bizarre as to be totally laughable, though Mrs Gandhi has advanced this as a serious consideration which the nation should note," said the paper, adding: "To admit such a theory would entail adopting the most unflattering assumptions about the state of mind and maturity of almost everybody concerned...."

Above all, however, the petty family wrangle could not but raise questions about Mrs Gandhi's motives and whether the strain of governing this vast country is finally beginning to tell. After all, a seasoned campaigner like the prime minister should know better than anybody else that in a contest of this kind, she has far more to lose than Maneka does.

—DILIP BOBB

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KARNATAKA

Shot In The Arm

WHEN Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde defeated his Congress(I) rival D. Linge Gowda by 23,156 votes in the hotly contested Kanakapura by-election held last fortnight it not only gave him the right to continue as head of the state but also gave teeth to the fledgling Janata Government in Karnataka. Said an ebullient Hegde: "It is a shot in the arm. A great morale booster for the Janata Party not only in Karnataka but throughout the country. We will now be able to consolidate ourselves."

Hegde has every reason to be optimistic, for the Kanakapura poll was the Congress(I)'s biggest chance to topple the Janata Government. The poll was necessitated because Hegde was not a member of the state legislature when he emerged as chief minister after the Janata Party gained a brittle majority in the Assembly elections held in January last. If Hegde had lost in Kanakapura the Government would have certainly collapsed. But despite the stakes being so high the Congress(I) muffed its chances when it failed to counter Hegde's brilliant election campaign. Veerappa Moily, leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, who was in charge of the Congress(I) campaign said lamely: "We did our best. But the voters seemed to have succumbed to the onslaught of the Janata Government's promises and misuse of official machinery. The poll has given a lease of life for the Government. But that does not mean it will continue for its full term."

Crushing Defeats: The by-election also saw Hegde chopping the controversial Kranti Ranga leader S. Bangarappa to size when the Ranga candidate T. Chanabasave Gowda polled only 316 votes and lost his deposit. Bangarappa's candidate for the Yelburga seat which was retained by the Congress(I), Sripadappa Adhikari, suffered a humiliating defeat too—with these crushing defeats the arrogant Bangarappa finds himself in the political wilderness with even the Congress(I) now unwilling to acknowledge his presence. Bangarappa's supporters in the Assembly have already been reduced from eight to six and now the remaining MLA's are likely to desert him.

It was Hegde's shrewd election campaign that really paid off in the Kanakapura by-election. The constituency is dominated by the Vokkaliga community which forms 60 per cent of the electorate. Hegde made Public Works Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, an influential leader of the Vokkaligas, his campaign manager, P.G.R. Sindhia, the minister of state for health, who had vacated his Kanakapura seat for Hegde had been touring the constituency since January and had pushed through several major developmental works like the provision of drinking water and construction of bridges.

In fact the chief grouse of the Congress(I) was that the Government had taken up provision of borewells on a war footing to woo the workers. But Hegde adroitly counters the charge saying that these developmental works were in progress even before he had decided to stand from Kanakapura. But as a result of the Government's intensive drive, from hardly 30 borewells in the taluk a total of 165 had been sunk before the campaign ended and only around 35 villages were without drinking water. Ironically m the hand pumps were painted green which is the colour of the Janata flag during the campaign lorries carryi could be seen plying all over the consti and this would have had a natural imp the mind of the voter. Apart from that carried out a village-to-village campai vering almost three quarters of the h in the constituency. There was a marke plicity in his style of campaigning too, won the hearts of the people.

Uncertain Future: But the defeat h the Congress(I) in a quandary abo future strategy. Moily's leadership has under fire from all sections of the party he survives it is because of his friend Pranab Mukherjee in Delhi. Moily do enjoy the support of either the Vokkali Lingayats in the party nor has he e red himself to the backward classes, o which he belongs to. The party is still un ded about who it should elect as the Pra

Hegde campaigning in Kanakapura: decisive victory

RAJ CHENGAPPA

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...ress Committee(I) president. With the ...in the by-election the Congress(I) high ...mand is reportedly looking for someone ...with a clean image, a rare commodity, ...would effectively lead the party out of its ...sent state of disunity. But right now the ...gress(I) party members are a demorali...ist. As a senior leader said angrily: ...t we need is a complete purge of the so...d old guards. Unless we clean up, we ...not get out of the rut we are in."

The Janata Party too is not without its ...es. With Deve Gowda being given ...place in the Kanakapura election the ...rvat sections of the party are feeling pi... The intense rivalry between the two ...rs in the Cabinet is sure to heighten. ...de is likely to expand his cabinet soon to ...a more backward class tilt lest the ...gress(I) accuses him of neglecting this ...ion. Now that his probationary period is ...e Hegde has to get down to real business ...tackling the farmers' problems, provi... drought relief for the state and finding ...loyment for the six lakh jobless. The ...ka Government seems to be aware that ...people's expectations are high and they ...not likely to be tolerant of any failure. As ...de admits: "We have no time to lose."

THE RECENT crop of by-elections ...have turned out to be a mixed bag for ...all concerned. While Hegde's thumping ...ory from the assembly constituency ...Kanakapura overshadowed all the ...er results, there is no doubt that the ...gress(I), by winning the Lok Sabha by-...ion from Porbandar in Gujarat, and ...ring the Shajapur and Tikamgarh ...mbly seats in Madhya Pradesh by more ...an adequate margins, received a much-...ded boost to its morale.

The Congress(I)'s victory in Gujarat ...Madhya Pradesh came as a welcome ...st to the chief ministers—Madhavsinh ...nki and Arjun Singh. The dissident ...rm that the two leaders have been facing ...quite some time has abated for the time ...g. In Madhya Pradesh, the dissidents ...been screaming for the chief minister's ...because, they charged, the 20-point ...gramme was not being implemented pro...ly and the BJP was making big strides in ...state.

In the recently-concluded budget sess... of the Assembly they were more vocife... than ever. In fact, at one time, they clai... to have the support of over 100 MLA's. ...by-election successes appear to have ...en the wind out of their sails for the mo...t. In any case, dissidence activity is confi... to sporadic outbursts that take place ...g assembly sessions—so the next three ...ths should be trouble-free for Arjun ...gh.

Arjun Singh (top) and Solanki: timely reprieve

Strengthened Position: There are rumours of a cabinet reshuffle in June. Arjun Singh might use this opportunity to induct people from groups opposed to him and defuse the dissident crisis further. Fence-sitters may also have been convinced by the by-election victories that the chief minister's position is quite secure and that it would be a good idea to stay in his good books to get tickets for the assembly elections which are two years away.

On the other hand, the die-hards who still count on the return of the Shukla brothers and number about four dozen, are unlikely to give up so soon. They might not be in a position to demand a change of leadership but they can certainly embarrass the Government, which should not be very difficult given the sorry state of the administration.

In Gujarat, the Opposition has received a considerable set-back, especially the fledgling Rashtriya Congress led by breakaway Congressman Ratubhai Adani. The Janata-Rashtriya Congress combine had hoped to demonstrate the weakness of the Madhavsinh Solanki ministry. However, it was not able to generate much enthusiasm among the electorate—the turnout was less than 50 per cent—and the Congress(I) candidate won by over 50,000 votes. All in all, the Congress(I) has proved that it is still a force to reckon with in the north.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA and SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

BIHAR

The Bobby Scandal

AN ATTRACTIVE young lady who dies a mystifying death, a host of politicians, and a police officer who is determined to discover the truth—such is the stuff of scandal. Last fortnight, this explosive mix had people running for cover in Patna. Swetnisha Rani, 35, also known endearingly as Bobby, was a typist employed at the Bihar Legislative Assembly. She died in the early hours of May 8 and was buried a bare four hours later. The fact that there are two death certificates relating to the death, and that Bobby appears to have been on more or less intimate terms with a number of powerful people and politicians, have set tongues wagging and opposition politicians shouting for justice and retribution.

Bobby was the adopted daughter of Rajeshwari Saroj Das, a Congress(I) member of the Legislative Council and former acting chairman of the Council. At four in the morning of May 8, there was quite a commotion at Das's house on Strand Road, with cars coming and going. Four hours later, Bobby left the house in a coffin, and was buried in the Pirmohani Cemetery.

Curious Facts: The local Hindi daily *Aaj* was the first to smell a rat. Senior Superintendent of Police Kishore Kunal registered a case of unnatural death and got the body exhumed. The post-mortem turned up nothing unusual, perhaps because, as Kunal said, the body was highly decomposed. Nothing daunted, he quickly sent the viscera for a chemical test. A week later, he had the report: it said that Bobby had been administered Malathion, an organic phosphorus pesticide.

By this time, however, Kunal had a lot to go on. Das was in possession of two contradictory death certificates. One was issued by the Assembly doctor Dr K. K. Jha and said: "The probable cause of death in my opinion may be internal haemorrhage." The other, issued by Dr Ashok Kumar Thakur, a cardiologist at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Cardiology, recorded that Bobby died of cardiac arrest at 4.30 a.m. Dr Jha had said that he had examined Bobby at 4 a.m.

A senior police officer points out, with studied understatement, that the same person cannot die at two different times from two different causes. Further, in the case of natural death, there was hardly any necessity to obtain certificates from two doctors at

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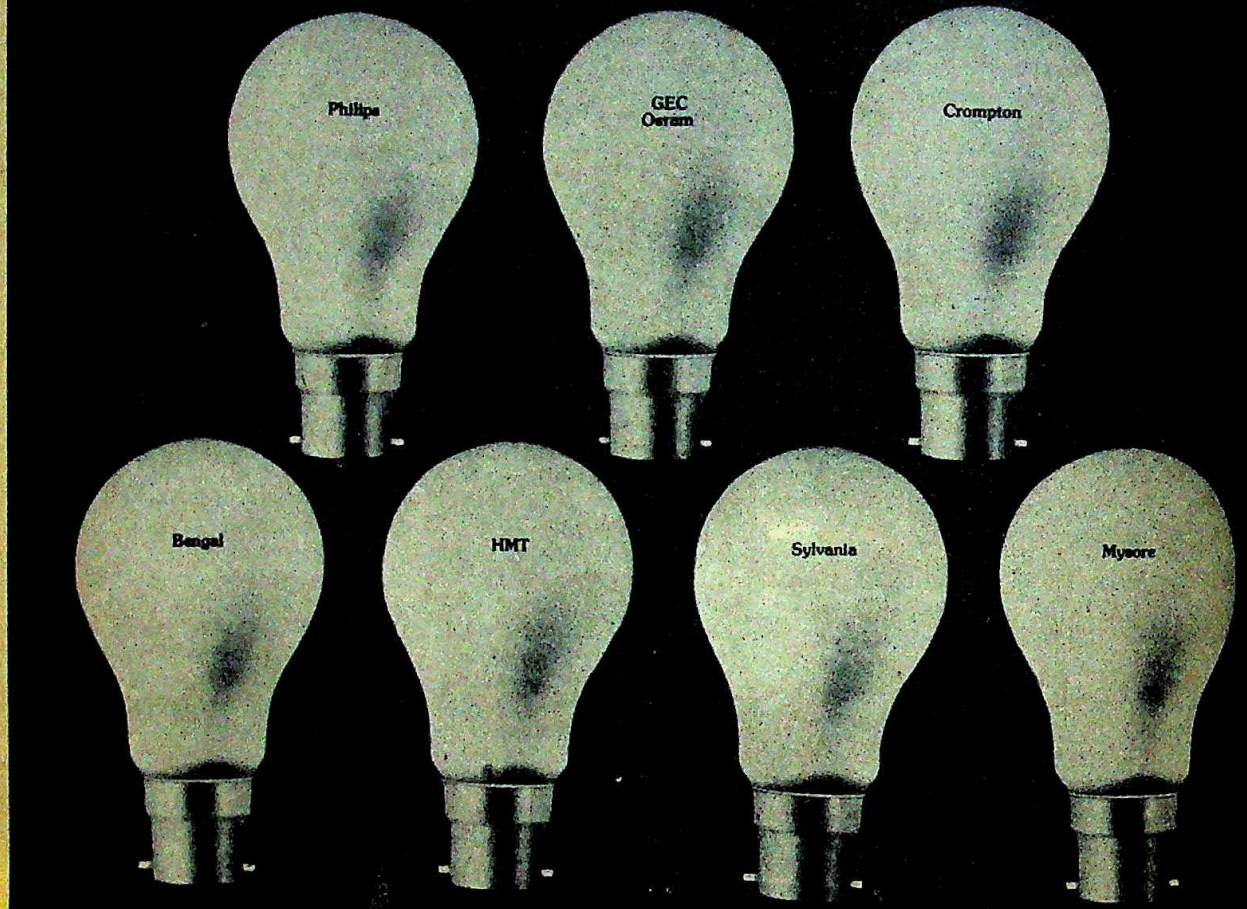
Make a wild guess

Who was the first to make lead-in wires for bulbs in India?



None of them.
It was the Kalpana Group—makers of Elektron tubes, lamps and luminaires.
Surprised? Wait! there's more...

Kalpana started years ago as a manufacturer of lamp components, which were till then being largely imported.

From making lead-in wires, caps and other parts, the transition to producing the lamps themselves was natural.

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Elektron. It will be worth watching closely in the future.

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Bobby and (left) Kunal: more than meets the eye

such odd hours. Das's story is that Bobby went out in the evening and returned in the night. She developed pain, vomited blood and. Das also said that Bobby had once fallen from a rickshaw and suffered internal injuries. Curiously, when the police searched the house, they could find few of Bobby's belongings.

Further investigation turned up more startling facts. On the evening of May 7, Bobby was rushed to the Patna Medical College in an MLA's car and admitted to the emergency ward for Mandrax poisoning. Records show that she had taken four tablets but before she could respond to treatment she was reportedly whisked away and the next morning she collapsed. The police claim that Bobby was given a sedative first to make her take the poison.

Popular Figure: The controversy was beginning to hum. As well it might. Bobby appears to have been popular in the corridors of power. A college drop-out with a history of broken marriages—she has two children from her second husband—Bobby had joined the Bihar Assembly in 1978 as a telephone operator. There are allegations that a private board exchange was installed in the assembly premises just to accommodate her. However, the PABX was wound up and she became a typist, which she remained till her death.

With such a prominent figure, it was not surprising that, even as Kunal prepared to probe further, there were reported pressures to go easy. Inquiries had revealed Bobby's affairs with a deputy minister, some MLA's and one highly connected employee of the Assembly. Inevitably, the Opposition jumped into the fray. The Communist Party of India said that the chief minister was not allowing the police to arrest the culprits as they were political bosses of the ruling party. Opposition leader Karpoori Thakur demanded a CBI inquiry into the murder. Dissident leader Ashwani Sharma demanded that the Union Home Ministry intervene as Kunal was under pressure to hush up the matter. Groups of people even held pro-Kunal demonstrations.

The police officer is, however, determined to bring the truth to light. Said he: "I am one hundred per cent sure that this is a pure murder case." He said that he suspected a handful of persons of being involved in the murder. Commented one police officer: "In an ordinary case all suspects would have been arrested by now but this involves politicians and they think they are immune to ordinary law." Everyone is now eagerly waiting the next episode in the Bobby case.

—FARZAND AHMED

ANDHRA PRADESH

Backfire

WHEN the Andhra Pradesh Government suspended three high-ranking officials, it little anticipated the barrage of bureaucratic outcry the action would arouse. Within a few months, the Centre —much to the embarrassment of the state Government—revoked the suspension of S. Santhanam, an IAS officer and former chairman of the Singareni Collieries Company Ltd. The two other suspended officers, N.K. Muralidhar Rao, IAS, and P.V. Pavitran, IPS had both appealed against their suspension and lost. But when Santhanam was charged with having incurred a loss of crores of rupees to the Singareni Collieries and consequent suspension on February 22, he fought back with a 10-page appeal to the secretary, Personnel Department, Home Ministry in Delhi and a six-page reply to the memorandum of charges against him.

Among other things he has asked Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao, former chief ministers B. Venkatram and Vijayabhaskara Reddy, former chief secretary S.R. Rama Murthy, Chief Secretary B.N. Raman and others to be summoned to give evidence before a full enquiry. Unwilling to take the charges against himself lying down, Santhanam has challenged the competence of the state Government to conduct disciplinary proceedings in the manner in which it has done. And when, on May 17, the Centre revoked Santhanam's suspension, it represented a decisive personal victory.

Santhanam, chairman of the collieries from January 1981 to August 1982, was aided in his crusade by a number of bureaucrats protesting against his suspension. Said a Kothagudem-based manager of the collieries: "Santhanam is a victim of efficiency. Coal production touched a record high during his days as managing director and the 74,000 tonnes output per man shift is the highest we have ever known in the company." Others view the suspension as the victimisation and harassment of a tough, no-nonsense, but at times impetuous official.

Charges: Chief Minister Rama Rao, however, thinks differently. At a news conference he denied having ever met Santhanam and alleged he had lost the Singareni Collieries crores of rupees. The charges against Santhanam include the loss of Rs 19.89 lakh in the purchase of the tonic, Miners K-Lite-E; loss of Rs 15.45 lakh in the purchase of detergent cakes; showing undue favour to M. Narayana, managing partner, Supra Chem, Hyderabad, in placing orders for re-refining used oils and lubricants; misuse of official position to appoint two general mazdoors and a clerk without their names being sponsored by the employment exchange and so on.

Santhanam: "victim of efficiency"

It is ironical that at the core of the charges against Santhanam are the incentives introduced to increase production and promote labour relations. The tonic and the soaps were being distributed as incentives to the workers. The charge that the application of re-refined used oil damages machinery is not borne out by facts. In fact, there is plenty of evidence of its efficacy and its vital role in the conservation of petroleum crude. A senior administrator who was shown the 15-page charge memo commented: "It is a travesty of justice and fair play."

The allegations are an offshoot of an en-

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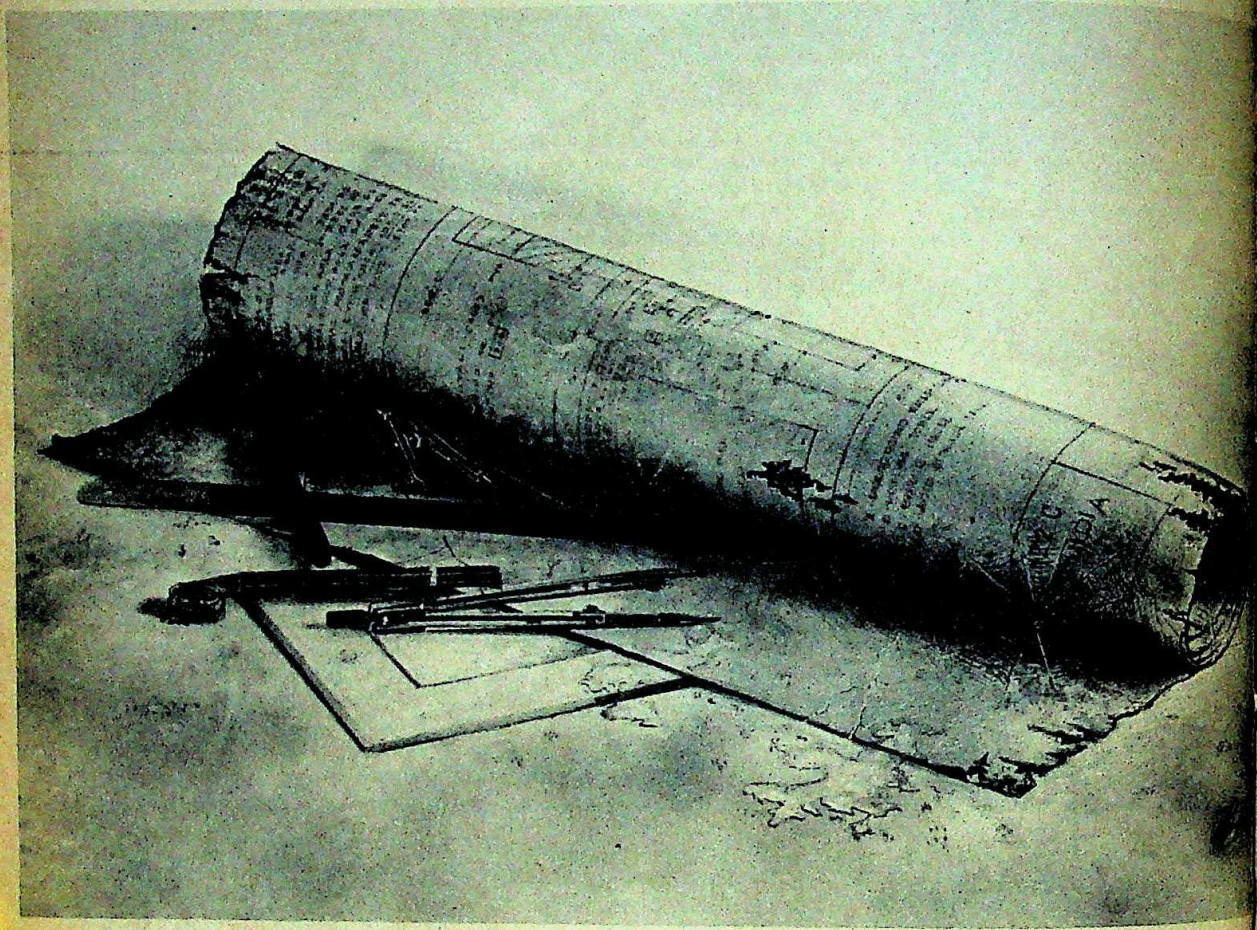

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by E.V. Rami Reddy, a retired IAS of- and ombudsman of the Telugu Desam ment, into a complaint about the of drill bits used in coal mining. were charged to have been purchased ant prices in July-August last year some legislators described as a non- from called Sajanam Enterprises.

Defence: In his defence, Santhanam to the secretary of the Department of Affairs: "Several witnesses were ted including personnel officers and private secretary and drivers. Re- have been tampered with and interpo- made. False evidence has been fabricated. All these can be proved by an impartial enquiry." Neither Santhanam nor the owners of any of the companies figuring in the charges were given the chance to explain their case. Even more mysterious is the way in which the charges came to be included in the enquiry against Santhanam since no complaints were made by directors on the board of the collieries nor any objections raised by the auditors. In fact, there is no provision for such an enquiry under the Articles of Association of the company.

Several senior executives at the collieries, shocked at the arbitrary proceedings, feel the pressing need for a judicial enquiry into the affairs of the company over the last 10 years. Bureaucrats say the credibility of the public sector is at stake if management decisions are looked at through a magnifying glass. Said a senior administrator in the state secretariat: "The administrative system diffuses responsibility and therefore no one is accountable. In such a situation, suspensions and charge memos are only weapons to terrorise officers." After a long time, it seems, a bureaucrat has put his foot down against the establishment to fight for his basic rights and won. But how far-reaching that victory will be is still a matter of doubt.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

HYDERABAD

Witch's Brew

THE VENEER of modernity is, all too often, only a veneer. The Shadnagar rural block, 50 km south of Hyderabad, is a case in point. Social scientists and rural development workers have worked here for years—and yet, a clash of interests could drive a group of villagers to take three of their rivals and burn them at the stake, first branding them as "sorcerers".

On March 19, villagers of Chattanpalli took six persons, hands and feet bound, in a procession to their farm, and set three of them on fire. Katakala Balaiah, 50, his wife Balamma, 48, and their second son Ramachandraiah, 22, writhed and screamed in the flames, watched helplessly by Balaiah's brothers and his eldest son Balakistaiah. The pyre burnt for three hours.

So thorough was the job the killers made of disposing of the remains that, in the words of Deputy Superintendent of Police Y. Konda Reddy, all that they could find the next day was "a broken piece of a silver bangle and a few bones, the largest of which was the size of an ivory dice. All that remained of the three persons could have been held safely in a clenched fist". Terrified villagers were warned not to talk about the incident.

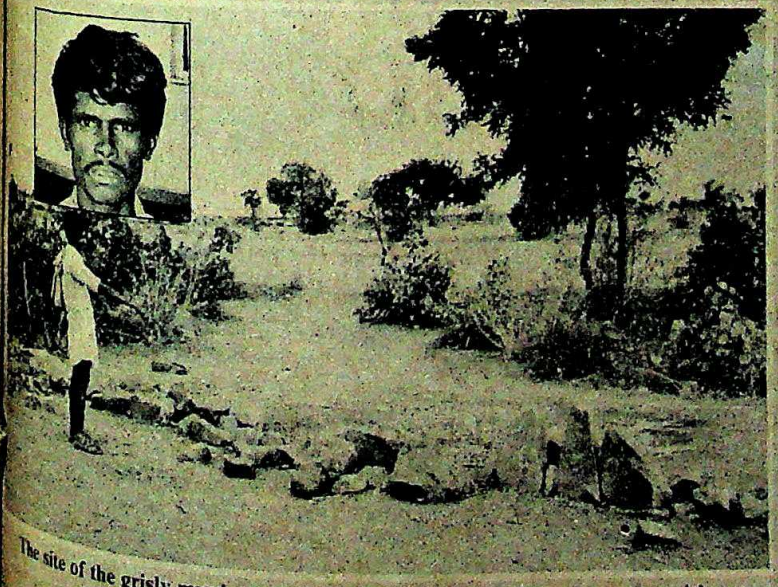
The district police, after making investigations, took a fortnight to report the incident to state headquarters. The local press virtually ignored the matter. After the incident, though 54 arrests have been made, the police are not able to pin the blame on any one person. Half the arrested persons are in Mahbubnagar district jail and the rest out on bail.

Vested Interests: It was a clash of interests between the Katakala family, which belonged to Muthurasas, a backward community, and the powerful, land-owning class of Reddys which led to the tragedy. The deceased had stood up to the sarpanch and the police patel of the village panchayat, questioning their membership. Eye-witnesses allege that former police patel Bhim Reddy, Police Patel Lakshma Reddy, Sarpanch Narsimha Reddy and a schoolteacher, Rami Reddy, then hatched the murder plot. Says Bhim Reddy in self exoneration: "We know it is a crime to kill a person. Why will we do such a thing? Balaiah and his family with their black magic are responsible for the deaths in the village and milch cattle going dry."

Says Balakistaiah, eldest son of the late Balaiah: "My father and his three brothers have been jointly farming 53 acres of dry land, but the Reddy landlords wanted to kill us and grab it. They have partly won, for we are forced to remain shelterless on the streets of Shadnagar without going back to our homes and land." Adds Venkatamma, Balaiah's ageing mother: "We are considered criminals wherever we go. Even relatives in three nearby villages did not allow us to stay there though we are victims of foul play."

Convenient Charge: The shocking murders have emphasised the unfortunate fact that belief in black magic and witchcraft, or *banamathi*, is widely prevalent in the area. The responsibility for strange phenomena such as clothes catching fire is put down to some unfortunate villager who is then hounded for all he is worth.

The black magic charge is sometimes used as an excuse to settle accounts, and more so because the villagers are not likely to ask questions afterwards. In fact, just three days after the Chattanpalli killings, a so-called sorceress Balamma, 60, of Kondareddipalli village, 20 km from Shadnagar, was dragged along a street and flogged to death. *Banamathi* had claimed another victim.



The site of the grisly murders, and (inset) Balakistaiah: dangerous superstitions

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SAINIK FARMS

Demolition Derby

TO THE uninitiated, it would appear to be some kind of plunder in wonderland. Debris is all that remains of what were architectural indulgences not too long ago, while other villas remain untouched for the moment. Fear and anger grip the residents of Sainik Farms, an exclusive colony in south Delhi, as they talk from behind locked gates and the only movement is provided by the constant summer winds. "Do you know what is going to happen next —we were not expecting this at all," says a woman whose house has not been demolished—yet.

The element of surprise was probably induced because the demolitions were due and those who got wise then obtained stay orders early this year. In fact, within a period of about three weeks, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) demolished 1,713 unauthorised constructions and the regions covered ranged from Nizamuddin to Najafgarh. The demolitions in Sainik Farms were a part of this and the residents of the "farming complex" were rattled out of their complacency when officials of the MCD moved in and tore down 14 houses before the others rushed off and secured their stay orders. While the residents screamed "political high-handedness and foul play", the authorities called it a part of their general demolition drive under way in the city.

Sainik Farms, one of Delhi's more coveted residential areas, was built on land that was due for acquisition by the Delhi Administration. A notification under Section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act had been issued as far back as November 1980, after which no plans could be sanctioned. But construction continued unabated. When an area comes under Section 4, the price of land falls because it heralds government take-over of the land for public purposes. At the time of notification, the price gets pegged on the value of the land at that time and no compensation is paid for structures erected after that.

Controversial Demolitions: "There is no consistency in the demolitions, because if they served a notification of Section 4 in 1980, aren't they then implying that whatever existed before that is legal," said Major M.L. Malhotra, president, Sainik Farms Colony Residents Welfare Association. "The Government does not want to pay compensation for the structures that existed before 1980 so they have destroyed some houses that were built before that so that it would appear that everything is illegal," he added.

"I met the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Buta Singh and he told me that the original sainiks would be protected. Now why should they discriminate between the original sainiks and those who came later? Besides, many of the original sainiks have also built palatial houses," said Malhotra. In the first phase of the demolitions none of the houses of the original sainiks were touched. Delhi's Lt-Governor Jagmohan said that none of the residents of Sainik Farms had ever submitted any plans and that there was no question of discrimination. The axe would fall on all equally.

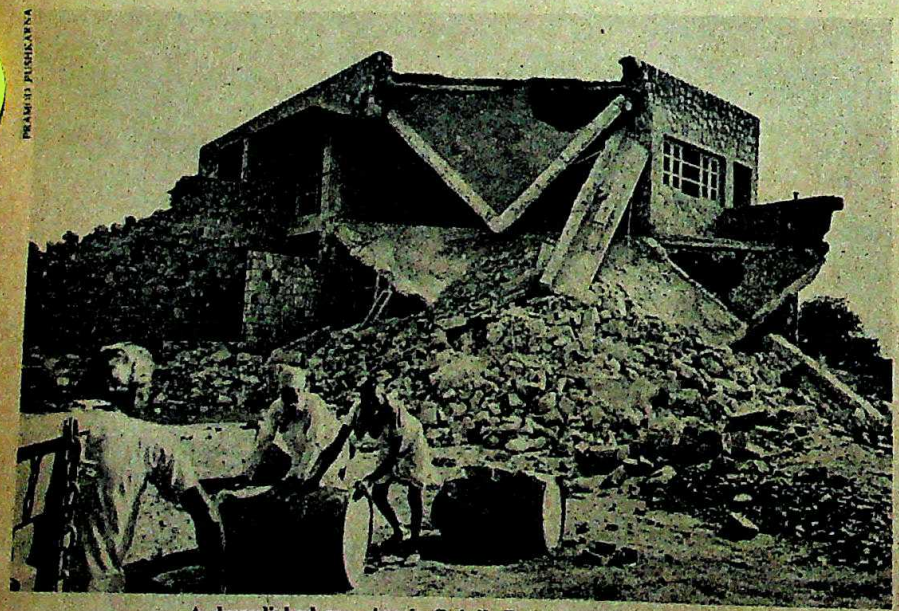
The Sainik Farms cooperative was started in 1964 as a scheme for defence personnel, and over the years, property changed hands. The result was an assortment of civilian and defence personnel. Even if a case had to be made out for farm-houses, it would not stand in court because most of the houses had not adhered to specifications.

Building Limits: According to it, a farm-house between one and two hectares the maximum built-up area can be 100 Besides, the houses have to be single storeyed. Sainik farm-houses, with their imaginative designs do not fit the bill. "But the original sainiks have to be blamed for this because we bought the land from them they told us there was no need to get it sanctioned. In fact, may of us bought built up houses from the sainiks," Malhotra said. "Now they are saying that this is green belt under Delhi's master plan— were the authorities sleeping so long? Why did they allow the original sainiks to build here?" asked Malhotra. The residents feel that it is a political move, designed to oust a few people. They have sought and got temporary stay orders on grounds of discrimination. The residents have also challenged the notification issued under Section 4. They have also filed a writ petition in the high court challenging the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation in that area because the land comes under the local village council.

When asked to comment on the matter, Jagmohan said: "I am not concerned with individual cases. I have issued only general orders to the DDA, DMC and NDMC to enforce their by-laws strictly. The drive is not confined to any single area or locality; all illegal structures are being demolished. Even before the current drive has commenced hundreds of illegal structures have been demolished." When informed that the residents of Sainik Farms called him the villain of the piece, Jagmohan: "The civic life of the Capital has been sapped by predatory and selfish interests. If the growing urban indiscipline is not checked with a firm hand, the city will be converted into a big slum and environment will be degraded."

"Jagmohan wants to show that he can demolish houses of influential people—if he has the guts, why doesn't he demolish Indira Gandhi's farm house in Mehrauli which is palatial too," asked Akbar Ahmed.

Irate Occupants: The brouhaha is far from over. The residents claim that they were given electricity, water and telephone connections and at that time no one questioned them. "When Jagmohan was the vice-chairman of the DDA, he was informed about Sainik Farms and at that time he did not



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

A demolished mansion in Sainik Farms: sudden move

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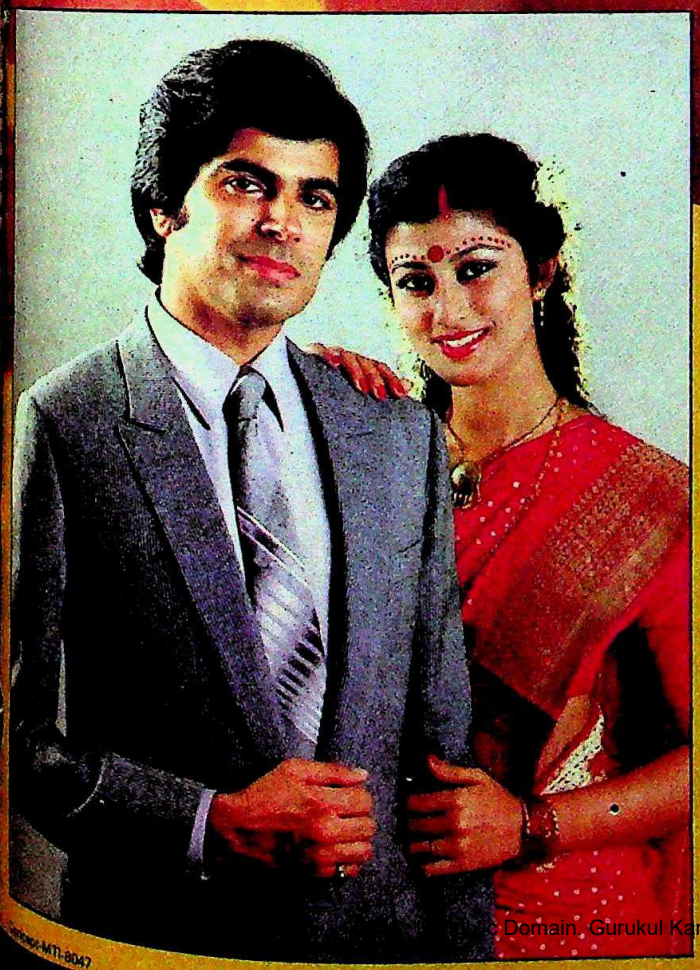

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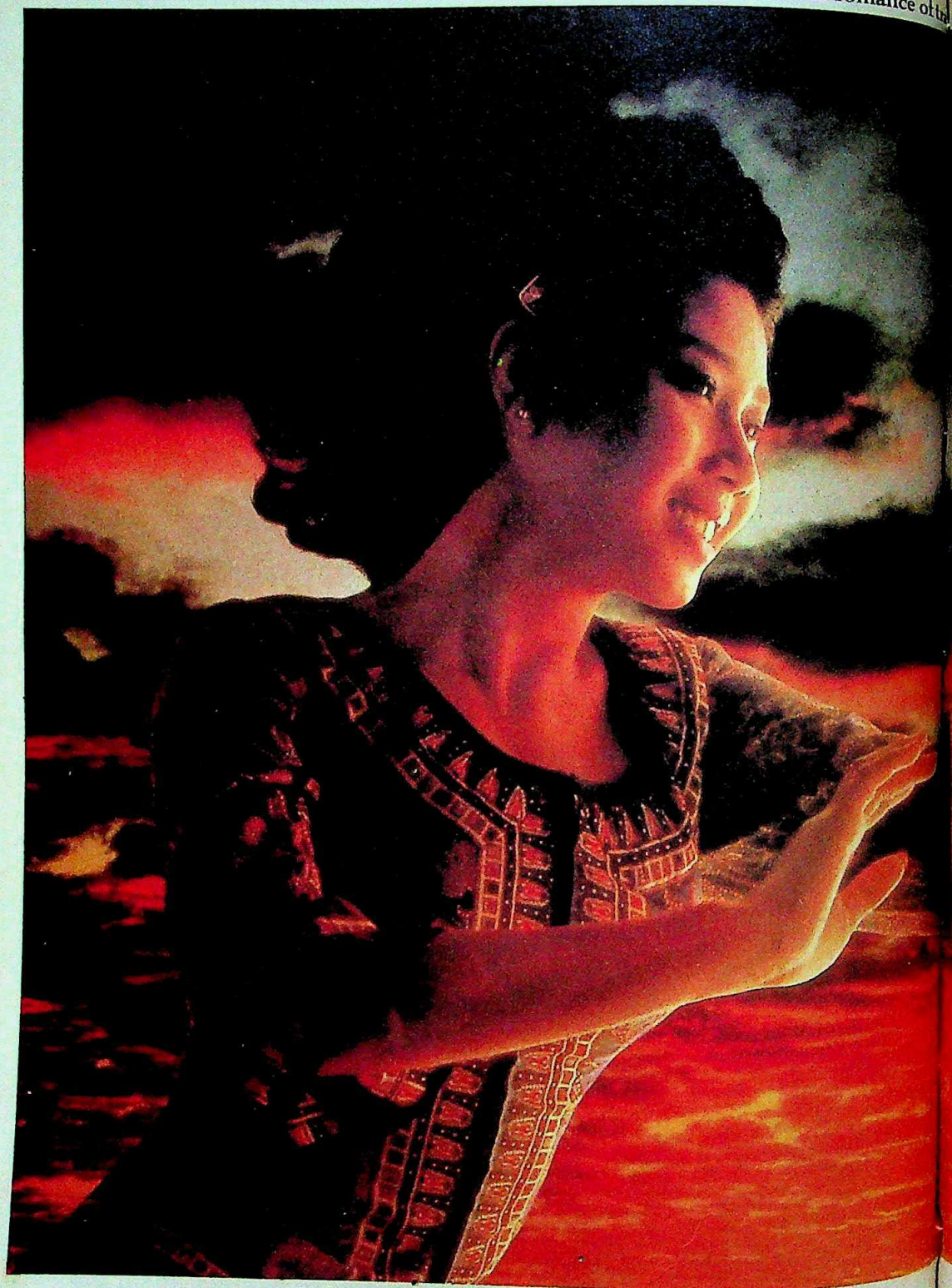

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..." said Malhotra. Replying to this, ...rate Jagmohan: "It is totally unfair ...ute statements to any individual. ...vernment works on written docu... and communications. The notifi... under Section 4 still stands."

...en asked why the demolitions were ...ed out earlier, considering the fact ...ice was served as far back as 1980, ...R. Sharma, superintending engineer, "This was on our priority list but we ...not get adequate police force—there ...Asiad and then the elections so we ...wait for some time." He also said that ...ion notices were served to the re... "That is not true because I was ...with my clients and when I asked the ...ities to show the orders, they refused ...—they arrived with a police force of ...500 and behaved in a very arbitrary ...," said Narinder Singh Vasisht, ad... who represents a majority of the ...ts. Vasisht also pointed out that the ...in question did not come under the ...ction of MCD. "We have challenged ...he said and went on to add that if need ...ey would move the Supreme Court.

When contacted, the officials said they ...continue demolishing. "Why can't ...egularise the colony as they are doing ...other residential areas—after all, it is a ...al waste to break down houses," Mal... said. The residents of Sainik Farms are ...about to give up and have decided to ...e what they insist is a "political vendet... Whatever be the merits of the two sides, ...ther bricks or brick-bats that are going ... Which, only time will tell.

—CHITRA SUBRAMANIAM

...JAB

...urder ...ania

IT TOOK a fusillade of bullets to gun down police chief A.S. Atwal outside Amritsar's Golden Temple and destroy any immediate hopes of an agreement between the Centre and the Akali lea... over the latter's uncompromising ...ds. Last fortnight, another deadly hail ...ets killed a much-loved sportsman and ...ed the extent to which the law of the ...les the troubled state.

Though unconnected with the Akali ...m, the brutal murder of former ...pic hockey star Prithipal Singh, 51, in ...daylight in the sprawling campus of ...Punjab Agriculture University (PAU), Ludhiana, sent shock waves throughout the country. If Atwal's murder showed the militant extremism of the Akali hard core, the killing of Prithipal finally brought home to the rest of the country the brutal fact that Punjab's problems are not confined to a mere question of river water and shifting of state capitals.

Widespread Condemnation: Perhaps if Prithipal had not been the international figure he was the slaying would have just been another statistic in Punjab's mounting death toll. An Arjuna Award winner, a Padma Shri who thrice represented India in the Olympics as the best short-corner specialist in the game, Prithipal was obviously the tragic victim of campus politics. Arriving at the PAU campus, where he was director of the student welfare programme, Prithipal had barely parked his motorcycle outside his office when two youths pulled out revolvers and pumped four shots into his head and chest in full view of over a dozen university officials. It was 8.20 a.m. and despite the fact that the university was stirring to life, the assailants calmly strolled to a waiting motorcycle and sped away.

Prithipal Singh: victim of campus politics

Though Prithipal's slaying received widespread condemnation, it was certainly not the first on the faction-ridden campus. A decade-old political brawl between warring unions, and intense rivalry at personal levels, has so far claimed at least half a dozen lives on the campus, the latest being on April 21 when Piara Singh, another sportsman, was killed in a gun-fight with Ashok Kaushik who also distinguished himself on the sports field. Another victim has been P.S. Randhawa, general secretary of the Punjab Students Union (PSU), a front organisation for the T. Nagi Reddy group of Marxists.

Since then, incidents of violence have become a regular feature at the university and Prithipal Singh, as the man in charge of student welfare and discipline, was sucked into the conflict though not with the kind of finality he imagined. In fact, at the time the sports star was killed, a commission of inquiry was being conducted to examine the causes of the campus violence.

Disciplinarian: University sources say that Prithipal's strict disciplinarian methods and his crusade to clean the campus of toughs and trouble-makers brought him inevitably into a head-on clash with the PSU elements. It was he who urged the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Sukhdev Singh, to take immediate measures to stop the violence.

It was largely as a result of his efforts that a senior Punjab government official, B.B. Mahajan, was appointed to conduct the commission of inquiry. "We were keen to put an end to the trouble," says Sukhdev Singh, "but the steps we had taken like banning liquor and turning out bad elements were obviously not enough."

However, there were ample warnings that Prithipal was singled out for retaliatory action. He had been publicly warned by PSU leaders and blood red posters on campus walls had warned: "*Khoon ka badla khoon*" (blood for blood) a reference to their charge that Prithipal was shielding their rivals. The police were concerned enough to post a police picket at the university and even assigned an armed guard to Prithipal. Unfortunately, the ex-Olympian was too proud and considered an armed guard a sign of cowardice. In the face of strong protests from his brother-in-law, former state finance minister Balwant Singh, he brusquely told the police to remove the guard and make better use of him elsewhere.

So far, police have arrested over two dozen PSU activists and express confidence that Prithipal's killers will be caught soon. But that will not be easy considering the manner in which violence and gun battles in the university have been allowed to escalate unchecked. It would be Prithipal's finest obituary if the wave of revulsion at his death succeeds in bringing back some semblance of discipline to the campus—an objective he was unable to achieve in life.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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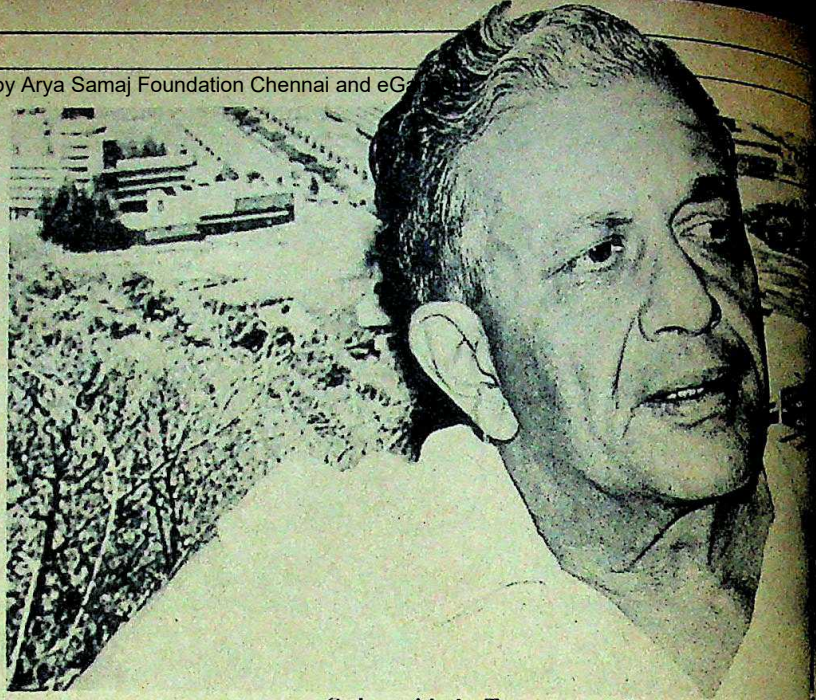
TARAPUR

Unwanted Exposure



Sethna with the Tarapur complex in the background

THE NUCLEAR power plant at Tarapur, some 100 km from Bombay has in the 15 years of its existence generated more than its share of headlines. Press coverage originally concentrated on the grand strides being made in nuclear science; as breakdowns in the plant became more frequent nagging doubts began to surface about the plant's safety. Last fortnight, a lead story in *The Times of India* charging that radiation at the plant was dangerously near the maximum permissible limits and was a grave hazard to plant workers sparked off such a furore that the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) lifted its traditional shroud of secrecy to reveal facts and figures in support of its contention that all was well at Tarapur.

The DAE's most controversial disclosure was that while in 329 cases, workers had received more radiation than their yearly dose of 5,000 millirems, the limit suggested by the International Committee on Radiological Protection (ICRP), this did not amount to a safety hazard as the workers' exposure was lowered in subsequent years so that the yearly average of 5,000 millirems was maintained. S.D. Soman, head of DAE's Health Physics division quoted ICRP publication No 26 stating that in exceptional cases a single exposure of over 10,000 millirems or even 25,000 millirems was permissible.

To opponents of the nuclear plant this seemed like adding insult to injury. "Irresponsibility and callousness in DAE go hand in hand," huffed a newsman. Newspaper editorials demanded to know what was the use of fixing limits if they could be blithely broken. A writ in the Supreme Court, later withdrawn, demanded adequate protection for workers.

Medical Views: The DAE, however, is supported by experts in nuclear medicine who agree that the radiation levels to which Tarapur workers have been exposed to are not matter for a scare. Said Dr B.N. Sharma, director, Nuclear Medicine, Bombay Hospital: "If there was any real danger to the workers from the radiation doses mentioned I would be the first to say so, but the figures quoted do not seem to me to be a matter for alarm." Added Dr R. D. Lele, head of the Department of Nuclear Medicine, Jaslok Hospital: "Five thousand millirems is an idealised frame of reference. If the cumulative dose of the worker averages 5,000 millirems a year it is not overly harmful. People have an exaggerated fear of radiation because it is the unknown enemy. The real killers such as gastro-enteritis, tetanus and malnutrition are accepted because of their familiarity."

To demonstrate the health of the Tarapur plant, Homi Sethna, DAE chairman, released to INDIA TODAY the normally secret radioactive discharges chart. This shows that radioactivity discharges have been falling since 1976, belying charges that radioactivity in the plant is on the increase. But, some scientists of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) the discharges chart is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the plant's health since it is an aggregate picture and does not indicate individual exposure. "It is a balancing act and the chart shows the average for the year. It does not reveal how individual limits may have been crossed during this period. The extent to which design parameters for radioactive discharge have been exceeded are a be-

HOMI SETHNA

Safety Factor

HOW SAFE is 'safe'? Dr Homi Sethna, 59, chairman of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) is categorical about the Tarapur Atomic Power Station's safety. In his elegant grey office, doubly attractive because of the panoramic view and the painting and sculpture collection of the late Dr Homi Bhabha, Sethna met INDIA TODAY *Principal Correspondent* COOMI KAPOOR. *Excerpts:*

Q. One of the recent press allegations is that the emission of radioactive matter from the Tarapur plant has reached alarming proportions and is now near the maximum permissible limit for gaseous activity discharge.

A. The gaseous discharge at Tarapur for 1982 was only 10.9 per cent of the permissible limit and the liquid activity discharge only 19.34 per cent. Incidentally, in 1977 we revised our maximum permissible limits downwards. For gaseous discharge the limit has come down from 580 millicuries per second to 450 millicuries per second. As the radioactivity discharge chart indicates that the radioactive emissions have been decreasing since the 1974–1976 period, the activity discharge reflects the health of the plant.

Q. How do Tarapur discharge figures compare with those of other atomic plants in the world?

A. They are comparable, but it is not possible to give figures.

Q. What are some of the highest recorded radiation doses received by plant workers?

A. The highest total radiation dose over the last 14 years is 56,170 millirems. Only 32 persons had crossed 50,000 millirems by January in this year. Of these two have crossed 55,000 millirems. The DAE safety review committee has limited lifetime exposure at 100,000 millirems.

Q. The Mother Jones magazine

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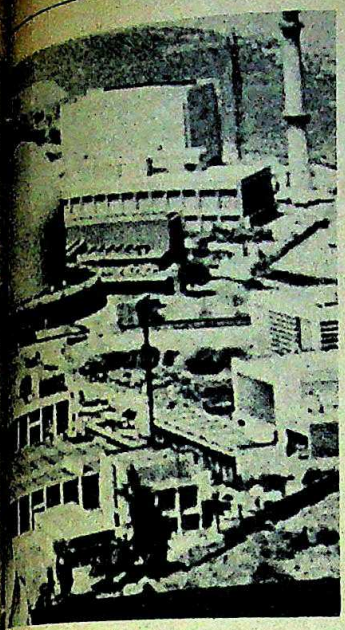

around 78 per cent of the limit, there was serious talk of closing down the plant. Another crisis period was between 1974 and 1976 during which time most of the cases of workers receiving more than their yearly quota of radiation occurred. Another charge against Tarapur is that ignorant villagers are involved in general maintenance work without being adequately instructed.

In fact, the two most serious radiation accidents at the plant have been caused basically by ignorance. In 1976, a worker was in a radioactive area when he dropped his film badge, which registers the radiation dose. He did not report the loss. Later, after reconstructing his movements and giving him the benefit of the doubt it was decided he had received a dose of around 18,240 millirems. In 1977, a civil maintenance painter received some 16,190 millirems when he slept through his entire eight-hour shift on top of radioactive laundry bags, as the laundry room happened to be unlocked.

The matter-of-fact attitude of the doctors towards the doses perhaps stems from the high levels of radiation in medical treatment, particularly in India where old equipment is commonplace. A single X-ray can mean a radiation dose ranging from 100 millirems to 7,000 millirems, fluoroscopy from 3,000 to 5,000 millirems. A CAT-scan dose on an old machine works out to 7,000 to 15,000 millirems; on a new machine around 3,000 to 7,000 millirems. In radiotherapy treatment for cancer, the doses are phenomenal, as much as 20,000 to 50,000 millirems and even higher than this over periods. Dr Lele, however, is quick to emphasise that there is no comparison between radiation workers and patients. In the case of patients it is necessary to take a small risk for the benefits involved.

Varied Doses: Nuclear science proponents charge that the opposition point of view is more ideological than rational, that atmospheric radiation at sea-level averages 77 millirems and can be much higher in a few freak areas. In the monozite sands in Kerala, where there is a thorium belt, generations of fishermen and their families in 10 villages have been receiving a yearly average dose of 1,270 millirems.

The problem with estimating what exactly is a safe dose of radiation is that work done in the field is minimal and still basically unknown territory. Effects of radiation such as cancer, leukaemia and cataracts can take as long as 40 years to appear and it is possible that the effects will be found only in the next generation. Low-dose radiation over a long period may well be more dangerous than single-shot radiation. The ICRP, while prescribing limits, agrees that there is no wholly safe radiation dose.

The vintage design of the Tarapur plant in the rapidly developing nuclear industry is undeniable. No plant of this design is still in commission elsewhere in the world. Today's nuclear plants are designed to generate more power and have a much lower radioactive discharge. Tarapur's discharge was always high even in comparison with plants of its size. The plan, however, is for decommissioning Tarapur only in 1993. Until that time, officials and scientists are keeping their fingers crossed.

—COOMI KAPOOR

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side of 1976 which has been picked up by other publications subsequently mentions that Clifford Beck, head of the US Government liaison regulation office, visited Tarapur in 1972 and stated later that Tarapur was a prime candidate for a "nuclear disaster". Beck saw workers perched on high rafters operating the radioactive wastes with long bamboo poles.

A. Clifford Beck never visited Tarapur. Radioactive waste is always in containers and handled mechanically. The only bamboos I can think of are the fish pole monitors. The monitors used to be carried on long bamboo poles. *Mother Jones* magazine folded up some years back but the charges have been picked up and repeated *ad nauseum*. What can you do? Everyone is interested in investigative journalism *á la* Anderson.

Q. The Tarapur plant is of an outdated design with a poor safety record compared to more modern plants. Leakages occur frequently.

A. It is true that recent designs of atomic power stations use more advanced technology. To the extent possible earlier designs incorporate the improved thinking consistent with plant limitations. Such backfitting has been done at Tarapur. We stop the plant immediately whenever there is a leak no matter how small. Our last run was nearly six and a half months long without stopping. Quite a record for any station in India.

Q. Isn't the stoppage of spare parts such as SRMS and IRMS since 1978 posing a safety hazard, as you have to use old and overaged equipment?

A. In case we have no spares we will have to shut down the plant. We have at the moment enough to continue for about a year. These are throw-away items at each refuelling so there is no question of us using overaged monitors.

Q. Two villages, Ghivali and Akkarpati are located just 1.6 km from the plant. Is that safe? There are reports of radioactivity 40 km from Tarapur.

A. Radiation exposures in the environment are under continuous surveillance. The exposure of the two villages is around 23 millirems and 26 millirems per year respectively. If there is particular radioactivity 40 km from Tarapur I should imagine it is around the Vajeshwari hot springs which have been there since time immemorial.

Q. What is your reaction to the Bombay Union of Journalists demand that pressmen be shown the medical records and chromosomal tests of workers without any preconditions?

A. I was willing to show the medical records but said the DAE could not be responsible for any legal action on behalf of individuals filing for breach of privacy. I have referred the union's request to the Law Ministry. Even the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation has mentioned that dose records should only be reported in a suitably anonymous fashion so that the privacy of the individual worker is safeguarded.

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SCINDIAS

Wrangling Royals

LAST month saw a fresh outbreak of hostilities in a bitter and wasting mother-son struggle. It followed the filing of a criminal defamation suit by Angre, personal secretary of Vijaye Scindia, against her son Madhavrao. Raje is a Rajya Sabha MP and vice-president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Madhavrao is a Congress(I) Lok Sabha MP.

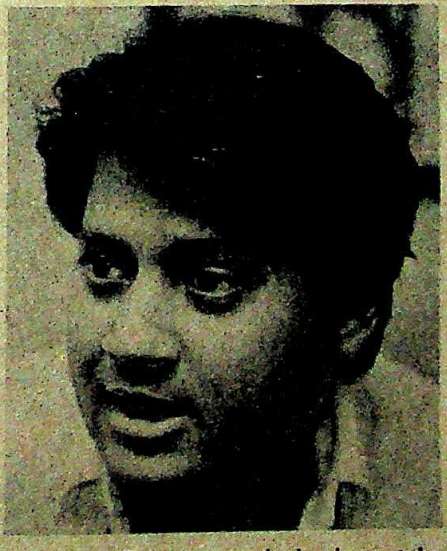
On May 20, outside the impressive building of the High Court in Gwalior, it was a scene that seemed right out of the post-Emergency Sanjay days. Several hundred BJP party workers crowded the gates of the building which, ironically, Madhavrao's grandfather had constructed in mid-century. When Madhavrao arrived, the impetus of their enthusiasm carried him through the gates along with their slogans and garlands. Even as Madhavrao executed a personal bond for Rs 1,000 in the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate V.S. Tomar, the workers kept up a chant against him right outside the window. Said an BJP advocate disgustedly: "Do they have to bring their politics into the high court premises? It amounts to an attempt to intimidate the court in the administration of justice."

Controversial Purchase: The suit came following a press statement issued by Madhavrao on April 1, 1982, soon after the controversial sale of *Surya India*; Angre was one of the partners in its purchase. In his statement, Madhavrao alleged that Angre's involvement in the magazine's purchase was a deliberate attempt to create a rift in the Scindia family. He also accused Angre of breaking his own family by creating differences between him and his mother and sister, Yasundhara Raje.

The statement was reproduced in several local papers—and one or two national ones—but Angre proceeded against *Navbharat*, a daily from Gwalior run by a Congressman. Among the accused, along with Madhavrao are the paper's Editor Jitendra Mohan Nagori and his wife Manju Nagori, the paper's publisher.

This is the third case in recent times involving the growing rift between mother and son. The first relates to the control of the Royal Scindia trusts (INDIA TODAY, April 30, 1982). And then, 10 months ago, Angre was arrested and charged with theft and attempt to smuggle antiques (INDIA TODAY, August 15, 1982). The BJP allegation then was that the police had moved only on instructions from the ruling party.

Vijaye Raje Scindia (top). Angre (right) and Madhavrao: tug of war



Tragic Rift: Angre, who has been at the centre of the controversy right through, was asked repeatedly in press interviews and conferences about the extent of his role in the family feud. Whatever his contribution, it has brought about a peculiar—and tragic—situation in which Vijaye Raje and Madhavrao both live in the enormous Jai Vilas Palace but rarely meet one another.

Says Madhavrao, reclining on a sofa in his home: "Nothing about Angre can surprise me any more. He is capable of everything if it is destructive and of nothing if it is constructive. This case is an outstanding example of his negativism. I am only surprised that my mother did not protest. And if she did, it must have been a very silent protest indeed." Madhavrao says that he issued the press statement because "I was simply overcome by the similarities and the key characters that were involved in both families (the Scindia and the Gandhi) were the same. Of course, I am sure that Mrs Gandhi understands my position."

Retorts his mother Vijaye Raje: "How long can any person tolerate harassment? And that has been the Government's constant attempt against people around me. I did try to persuade Angreji against the court case but he was absolutely boiling with anger. Even his daughter has been needlessly involved in one of the cases and he said that they would not take such attacks quietly. Why don't they live and let others live?" Angre was out of Gwalior and unavailable for comment.

Attitudes: Of the feud, Madhavrao asserts: "My mother should accept that I have a mind of my own. I rebelled only because I was expected to wear a mental strait-jacket that suited Angre's way of thinking. And that I refused to accept. Angre is not my father, he is not the head of my family. But this gentleman has immense power over mother, she is completely manipulated by him. Yes, initially it hurt me to be at odds with my mother but now I have built a defensive armour-plating to prevent that."

Vijaye Raje agrees that there is no need for the political fight to spill into the home and adds sadly: "Which mother would like to fight with her son? Perhaps this is my fate that this should happen to me in my old age." Then she adds spiritedly: "My son accuses Angre of engineering a split but Angre would be a fool if he wanted to do that. If my son had any political sense even he would see that it is in our own interest to stick together. In the 1971 elections, for example, although there was an Indira wave, it did not touch our area simply because we were together then."

The queerest aspect of the whole affair is that while mother and son talk freely about personal matters to pressmen, they have been unable to get together and sort out their personal differences, nor their political ones. On the other hand, it reflects very poorly on the state of politics today that these are greater issues than the problems of the region. The coming legal battle in Gwalior is just another step forward for personality politics—with a twist.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in Gwalior

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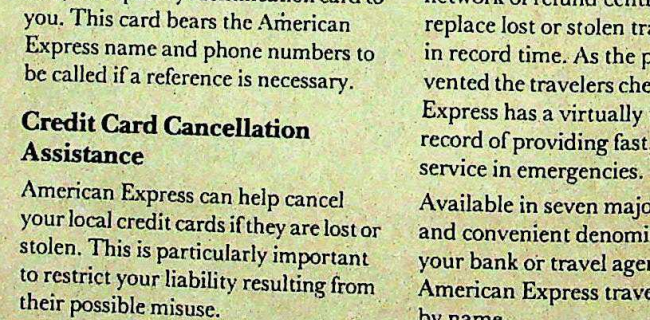

AMERICAN EXPRESS

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rossed words

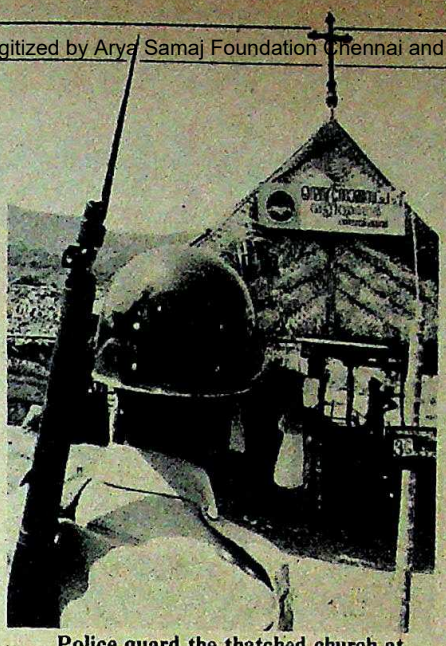
FOR 29 YEARS Kerala Chief Minister K. Karunakaran has prayed on the first day of the Malayalam month at the Shree Krishna Temple at Guruvayoor. But on May 15, as he entered mple, the chief minister was booed by ands of angry Hindus. The reason: his ssion for a church to be constructed on e holy to the Hindus—Nilakkal.

Nilakkal is about 150 km from Tri- rum. The area, once a dense reserve st, is today the stage for a Hindu- an confrontation. The confrontation, escalates, will further shake Karuna- 's already unstable coalition. The cur- rose on March 29, with the discovery cross on the Kerala Farming rporation's (KFC) private land, just 200 m the Nilakkal Mahadeva Temple. Next singing hymns, Father Mathew Anthi- kam, chief priest of the nearby Pambav church, and two jeep-loads of his wers gathered round the spot where the s was found. Immediately they erected a ched shed and daily prayers were started. e Catholics it was clear that this was the where a church–built centuries ago by Thomas–once existed.

Meanwhile, the Hindus grouped with Vishal Hindu Sammelan to fight the holic demand for a church. At the same e, the crusade for the church was given a st by the formation of the Nilakkal tion Council under the auspices of the All ala Catholic Congress, led by rubber on M.D. Joseph. And on May 19, when unakaran's government finally granted hectare of land for a church at Nilakkal. ocked Hindu community led by the melan called for demonstrations to stop Government from allowing the con- versial church to be built.

Rising Ire: Fearing further trouble from SS which is holding its annual camp at ndrum, the Government passed pro- bitory orders. In spite of that, the RSS took te march through the city shouting pro- dhi slogans. Over 1,000 RSS people were ested, although they were later released. the Nilakkal area there was a heavy police ence. Said a police officer: "Anything happen. But for us, the RSS volunteers in mple would have demolished the tem- ary thatched church."

Both the makeshift church and the temple are situated on the KFC's land. But while the temple has always been there, the church, according to Parameswaran Nair, the assistant farm manager, is encroaching on their territory. Said Nair: "The cross which was found here was a brand new cross without even a trace of mud on it. Even the chisel markings were fresh. Moreover the area was under intensive cultivation–no cross would have remained underground for so long." Retorted T.V. Vargheese, caretaker of the church at Nilakkal: "We will build a church here even if we have to be martyrs for it." A fence of white flags demarcates the area around the thatched shed and 13 crosses are pitched around an altar where a picture of the Virgin Mary and Christ are kept.



Police guard the thatched church at Nilakkal: communal tension

In his defence, Karunakaran insists that the thatched shed will be demolished immediately and the new church will be constructed only one-and-a-half km away from the Mahadeva Temple. Moreover the church will not have any burial rights Said he: "There is a hill between the Nilakkal temple and the proposed site. It has a separate approach road. There will be no connection between the temple area and the church."

Differences: The justification has not smoothed the ruffled feathers of Hindus. Father Mathew Anthiyakulam reiterated the Christian belief that there was a flourishing Christian centre in Nilakkal in 52 A.D. The church here was one of seven built by St Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus Christ. Anthiyakulam added that the temple itself was constructed on the ruins of the St Thomas church.

Meanwhile, an archaeological team led by Professor John Ochanthuruth of Calicut University insisted that the cross discovered at Nilakkal could not have any connection with the cross of St Thomas since the crosses discovered in Kerala do not date back to even the eighth century. He also believes that there was a Hindu civilisation in Nilakkal as is evident from the remnants and sculptures dating to the middle ages. Said P. Parameswaran, the state general secretary of the Sammelan: "The visit of St Thomas is only a legend. If Christians claim a church on the basis of traditional beliefs, we can reclaim temples which have been converted as churches like the Palayur Church in Guruvayoor which was a Shiva temple." According to Hari S. Kartha, a RSS leader in the state: "At this rate they will build another St Thomas church on Tirupati Hills and fabricate legends to prove it." The bitter retort makes one thing clear—both communities will have their share of crosses to bear in the months to come.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

ORISSA

Seeds Of Trouble

EVERY man sees the light at some time or the other in his career. Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik of Orissa is no exception: the beleaguered Congress(I) ruler has, by his own admission, finally discovered the root cause of his present sea of troubles—among them various corruption charges and a trio of no-confidence motions on the final day of the last session of the Orissa Assembly—that threatens to wash away his ministry. Replying to the no-confidence motion, Patnaik told the House that it was "the nationalisation of salseeds trade that was responsible for the no-confidence motions against the Government."

No one had the slightest difficulty understanding the chief minister. He was, in essence, alleging that dissidents, opposition leaders and salseeds tycoons—in particular, Patnaik pointed the finger at Janata Party MLA Ashok Das and Sambalpur industrialist J.P. Lath, both prosperous salseeds traders—had got together to make life miserable for him ever since his government had nationalised the lucrative salseeds trade in February through an ordinance, which last month was converted into an act by the Assembly. Said Patnaik: "The Government deliberately nationalised the salseeds trade to ensure that it remained free from the influence of the industrialists."

Different Arguments: Orissa Forest Corporation (OFC) Chairman A.K.Roy said that the trade was nationalised to plug reve-

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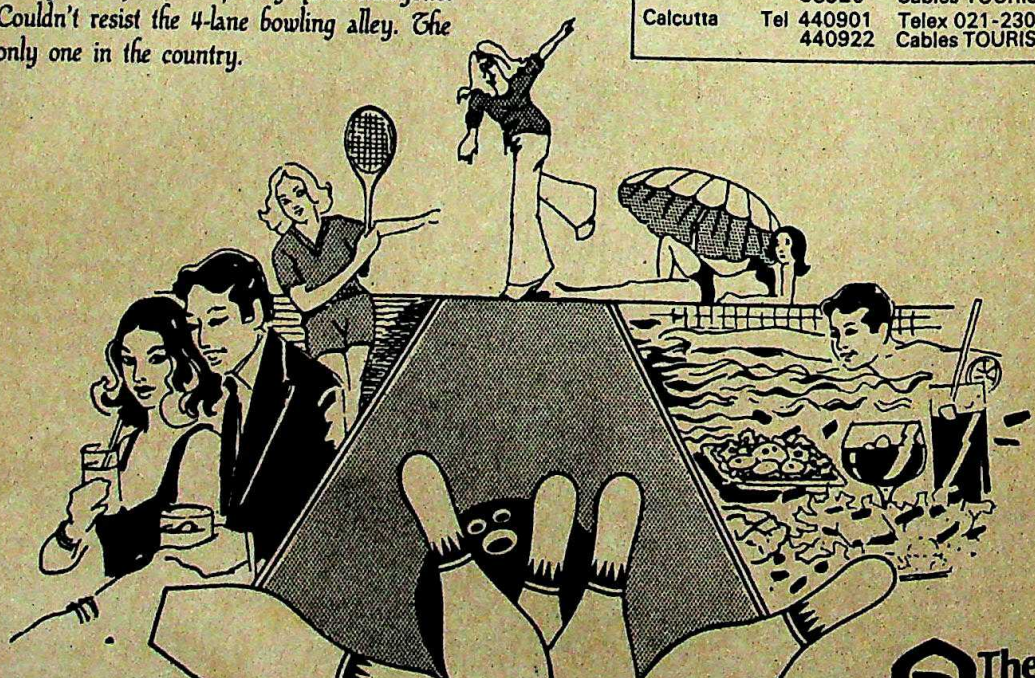

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leakage: he charged that the private traders exploiting Orissa's huge sal forests. He showed the actual collection figures and paid royalty first at Rs 65, then at Rs 90 a tonne when the rate had been increased to over Rs 300 a tonne. What was worse, said Roy, the traders were paying the tribal pluckers at the rate of 50 paise a kg, for a task which involves much hard labour.

The traders, however, give a different version of the controversy. Speaking on his behalf, his "friend" Lath's behalf, Das, who is reportedly close to Janata Party strongman Biju Patnaik; denied Patnaik's allegation that they were hobnobbing with the Congress(I) dissidents and were digging up corruption charges only now when the salseeds trade had been nationalised. He dismissed a statement by Akshay Mathur, a friend of the chief minister of Delhi, that "J.P. Lath, a contractor and industrialist, who had monopoly in salseed trade during the Janata period, has been heavily financing the opposition and the dissidents after nationalisation of salseed by the government".

Janata MLA Das (right) and the advertisement taken out by Lath's company proclaiming its exports achievement: powerful industry

Clarified Das: "There is a limit to everything. It is true that we contributed to the Congress(I) fund during the Lok Sabha elections, assembly elections, the Cuttack by-election and the Andhra Pradesh elections. But when we refused to contribute more Patnaik turned vindictive and nationalised salseeds. If he denies or challenges what I say then I am prepared to produce evidence and prove it." The nationalisation has already been challenged in court and, says Das, "We will fight it till the last", legally or politically. He finishes firmly: "We know only one thing, strike while the iron is hot, and we are striking. The chief minister will have to go. There is no alternative left to him."

Huge Forests: This is "jungle politics" at its best, or worst, reminiscent of the days when the *kendu* leaf trade, a source of party funds used to make or break chief ministers and governments before it was nationalised in 1973. The "jungle" in question, the sal forests in Orissa, sprawl over 38,733 sq km, which have been divided into 27 divisions. As minor forest produce, salseeds must be harvested in one month – May-June – before the onset of the monsoon. It is the main source of livelihood of the forest tribals and is the base for oil, soap and butter chocolate substitute, which earns a substantial amount in foreign exchange. Neighbouring Madhya Pradesh and Bihar also have extensive sal forests, 37,682 sq km and 33,504 sq km respectively in area, but there the forests are exploited by state forest development corporations.

The present furore has its genesis in the decision of the Janata government to lease the forests, then handled by the OFC, to private traders. The OFC was paying Rs 100 per tonne as royalty; it offered to double this. The state chief secretary suggested the figure of Rs 300 per tonne as the market rate then was Rs 900 per tonne. All of a sudden the Government decided to lease the forests to private traders at the royalty rate of Rs 85 per tonne and the chief secretary lost his job. Political observers lost no time in linking the decision to the fact that the chief minister was then trying to win a vote of confidence.

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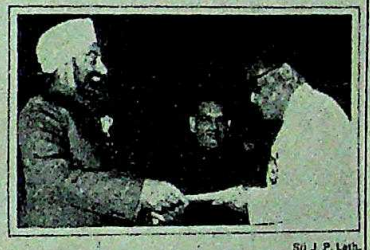

Sri J. P. Lath, Managing Director.

According to Forest Department sources, 21 out of the 27 divisions were leased to a handful of traders – 12 to Lath, three to Orissa Minor Products, a company owned by Das's brother, four to Baiju Agrawal, who was detained under the National Security Act for paddy smuggling, and two to Ajit Samantray's Orissa Vegetables Oil Complex. One minor division went to the Tribal Development Cooperative Society and three to the Aska Central Multi-purpose Cooperative Society. Two not very productive divisions were auctioned off. Admittedly, Lath is one of the pioneers of the salseeds trade. His Orissa Oil Industries Limited has won the state export performance award for two years and in January this year bagged the national award for "outstanding export performance" for the year 1979-80.

Trader Power: The short-lived Lok Dal ministry that followed the Janata's confirmed the power of the traders by doubling the lease period. The Congress(I) predictably cried itself hoarse over the affair. When it came to power, however, it did nothing – the Orissa Forest Produce Control of Trade Act, 1981, which would have allowed the Government to terminate the lease was not invoked – and this was seen as the price for a fairly quiet Janata Party-Lok Dal opposition in the Assembly. In fact, All India Yuva Lok Dal Secretary Chittaranjan Mohanty wrote to party leaders last year saying that "a caucus of legislators belonging to Lok Dal is trying to paralyse the party in connivance with Congress(I) ministers". He named Das as one of the legislators.

But in 1980 the Simplipal Forest Development Corporation asserted its right to collect salseeds in the leased area, and won a legal battle which stretched right up to the Supreme Court. Pressure was mounting: the state Government decided to enhance the royalty from Rs 90 a tonne to Rs 315 a tonne, to bring it on par with that in Madhya Pradesh. The Government also decided to nationalise the industry if the traders balked at the increased royalty.

Dissident Storm: Congress(I) dissidents were galvanised into activity. K.C. Lenka, Matalub Ali, Bipin Das and Hemananda Biswal, the chairman of the Assembly committee on public undertakings which exposed the mustard oil deal (INDIA TODAY, April 15, 1983), held public meetings where they openly criticised the Government. Biswal released the committee's findings, in the process adding to Patnaik's discomfort. Patnaik and Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee(I) chief Chintamani Jena complained to the party high command, to no avail. Then came the nationalisation – and the storm really broke over the chief minister's head.

The Government now says that the increased royalty will add to revenue and that the tribals' wages have increased from 50 paise to 90 paise a kg. Officials are reluctant to voice the real reasons for the take-over. Said Roy cautiously: "I don't know the exact reason. But the decision is correct in the interest of the state and the poor tribals. Sometimes a wrong reason may lead to a right decision. This seems to be the case with salseeds." The bare truth is that Patnaik wanted to teach a lesson to people he felt were getting too big for their boots. His predicament is that they, in their turn, are determined to teach him exactly the same lesson.

— FARZAND AHMED in Bhubaneswar

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WEST BENGAL

Grassroot Power

WITHIN a year of having secured a mandate from the people to rule West Bengal for a second term, the Left Front will go to the nearly 2 crore rural electorate on May 31 to seek their support for the control of 52,000 panchayats. Since their formation on the basis of elections five years ago, the panchayats have become the sole agencies for conducting rural development work; consequently, they are the most important lever for controlling rural politics.

Judging by last year's assembly election results it is evident that the Left Front and particularly its largest constituent the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) has used the panchayats to good effect. The Congress(I) objected that the panchayats were being used by the Marxists to divert public funds to rural areas to further their political interests. The Marxists, it seems, do not deny the charge.

Writing in the party organ *Ganashakti*, Panchayat Minister Benoy Chowdhury says: "The panchayat elections of 1978 brought about a qualitative change in life in West Bengal. For the first time, the poor villagers realised that they also had a say in government functioning. During the past Congress regimes these people could not even dream of such participation."

While Chowdhury does not say so in actual words, the implication is clear that by giving the rural poor the right to determine how public funds should be spent in their areas, the Marxists have ensured for themselves a kind of political support which is not likely to be withdrawn in a hurry.

Key Role: This support has created problems within the ruling Left Front. With all constituents trying to grab as many panchayat seats as possible, electoral adjustments could not be reached for about 10,000 of the more than 52,000 seats. Asked whether such infighting would not harm the Front, its Chairman and Marxist leader Saroj Mukherjee said: "These will be friendly contests." Leaders of other Front constituents, such as Ashoke Ghosh of the Forward Bloc, asserted that no effort would be spared in maintaining the Front's unity.

Such differences among Front constituents had also arisen during the first panchayat elections five years ago when the Marxists won over 60 per cent of the seats. Apart from displaying to the Centre their strength in rural Bengal, the panchayat elections will also serve to make clear to the other constituents that in West Bengal it is the Marxists who really call the tune and no other leftist party can survive without total allegiance to them.

Since their inception, the Marxists have spared no effort to use the panchayats as effective weapons for consolidating their rural base. In the first Left Front ministry, the panchayat department was held by the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), but the task of guiding the panchayats was left essentially to a team of three: planning adviser Satyabrata Sen, land reforms minister Benoy Chowdhury and finance minister Ashok Mitra, all members of the CPI-M. The Marxists kept the panchayat department for themselves in the second Left Front Ministry.

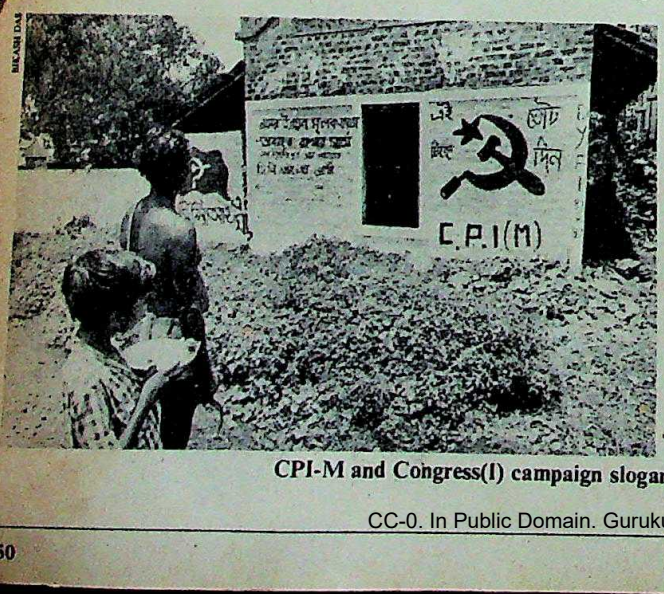
The Rs 600 crore spent in rural areas in the last five years through the panchayats has made an impact. Said Ganesh Roy and Ganesh Khan of Chapsara, about 30 km west of Calcutta: "Some good work has definitely been done by the panchayats. We do hear of corruption and of money not [illegible] spent properly; but we go by what we [illegible] The roads and tubewells that have come in the last five years were not there before even though we had felt the need for them very badly. And to us, that is what counts."

Complaints: Not that the charges of corruption are entirely baseless. In the last five years over 1,000 panchayat members have been proceeded against. Though the figure is small, it is an indication that the germ has entered the body. Many leaders, while issuing constant circulars to district units to be vigilant, say: "If our panchayat members did nothing but indulge in unfair practices then we would not have received the support from the rural masses that we did last year. The fact also remains that, unlike in the past, there was no exodus from the villages to the city during the floods of 1978 and last two years' drought. This indicates that relief distribution by the panchayats has largely been fair."

While making nominations the party has ensured that people against whom there is the slightest hint of corruption do not get a place in the list. Clearly, the CPI-M is not taking chances. That is also evident from the nature of electioneering which the Marxists and their allies have chosen to adopt: big rallies have been abandoned. Said Saroj Mukherjee: "These are a waste of time." The reason is that a rally does not give the leaders an opportunity to communicate with the electorate such as in group meetings.

The choice of group meetings as the principal means of campaigning shows that the Marxists know the villagers have a lot of questions which must be answered satisfactorily. As Kanti Sen of Singur village explained: "People are always coming to the panchayat office with their problems. While we cannot always solve these, it is a healthy sign that the people have become conscious of the importance of panchayats."

Significant Work: Sudhansu [illegible]



CPI-M and Congress(I) campaign slogans in villages: Marxist consolidation

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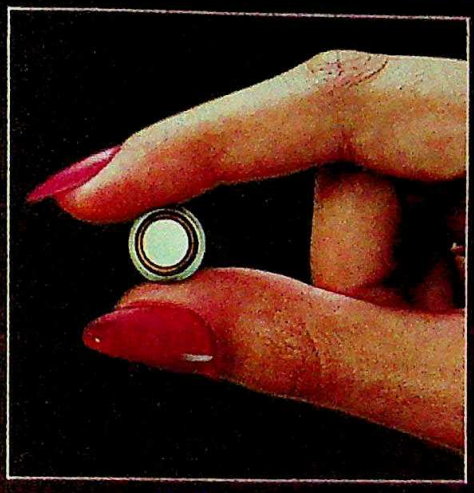

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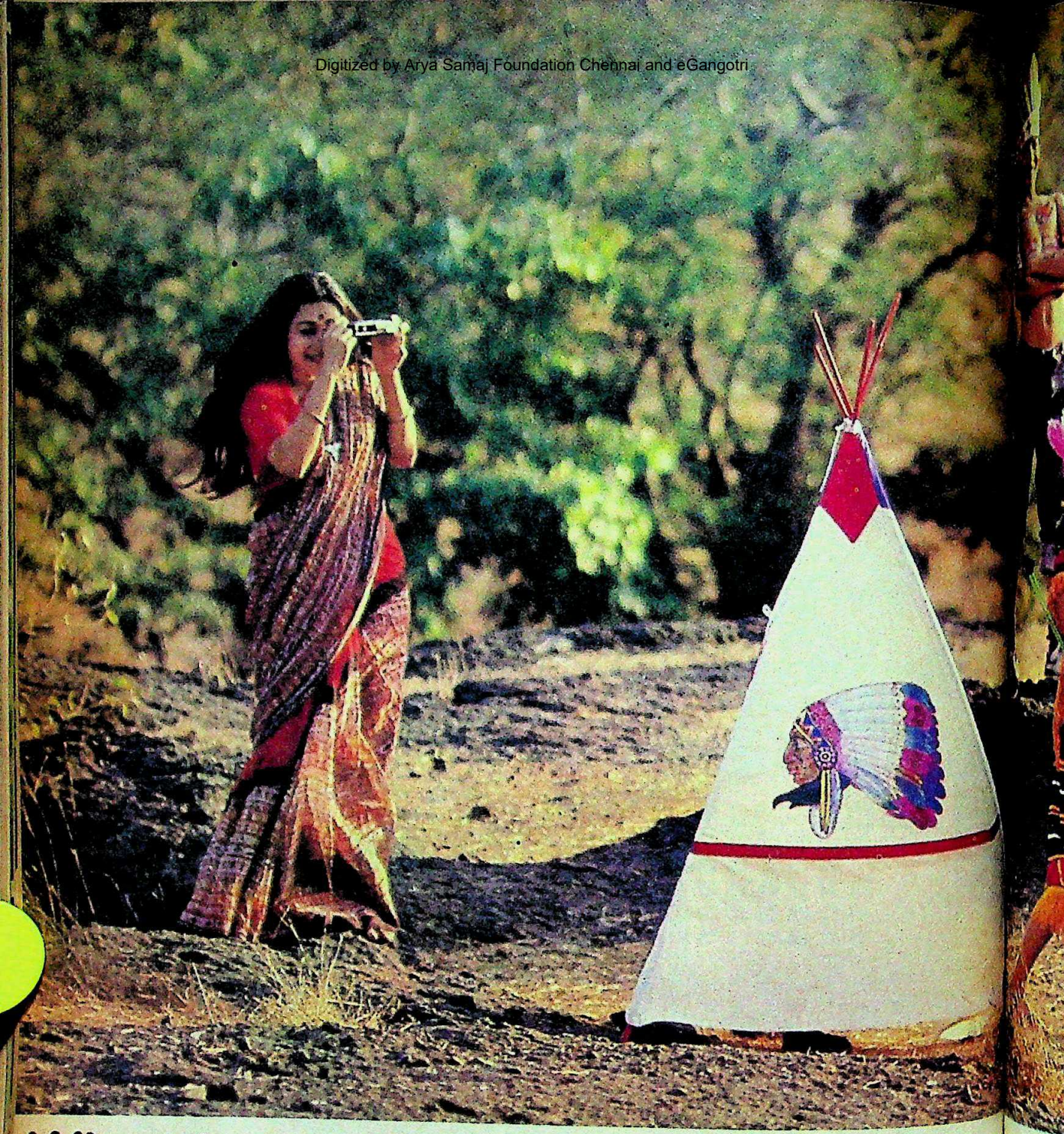

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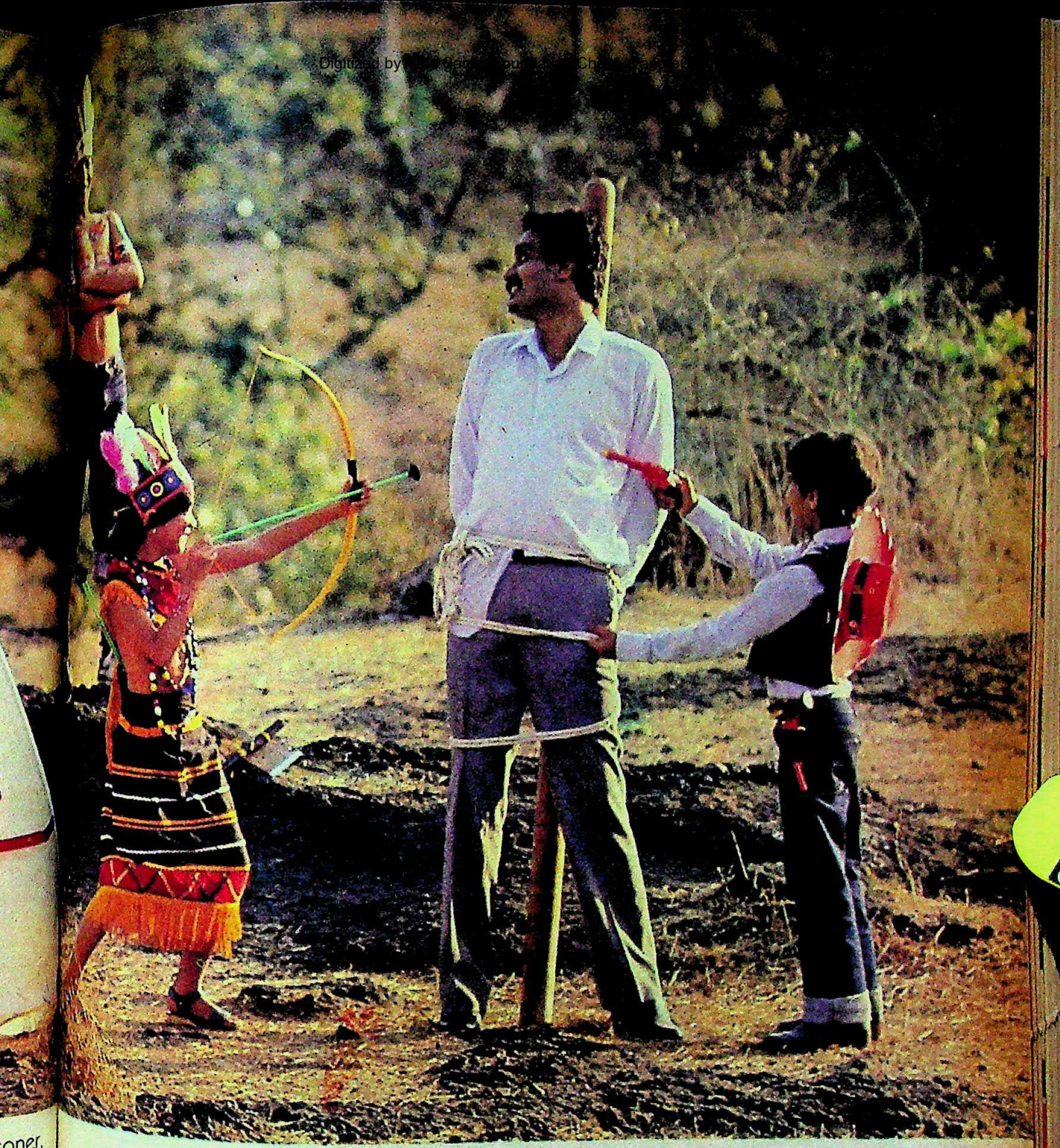

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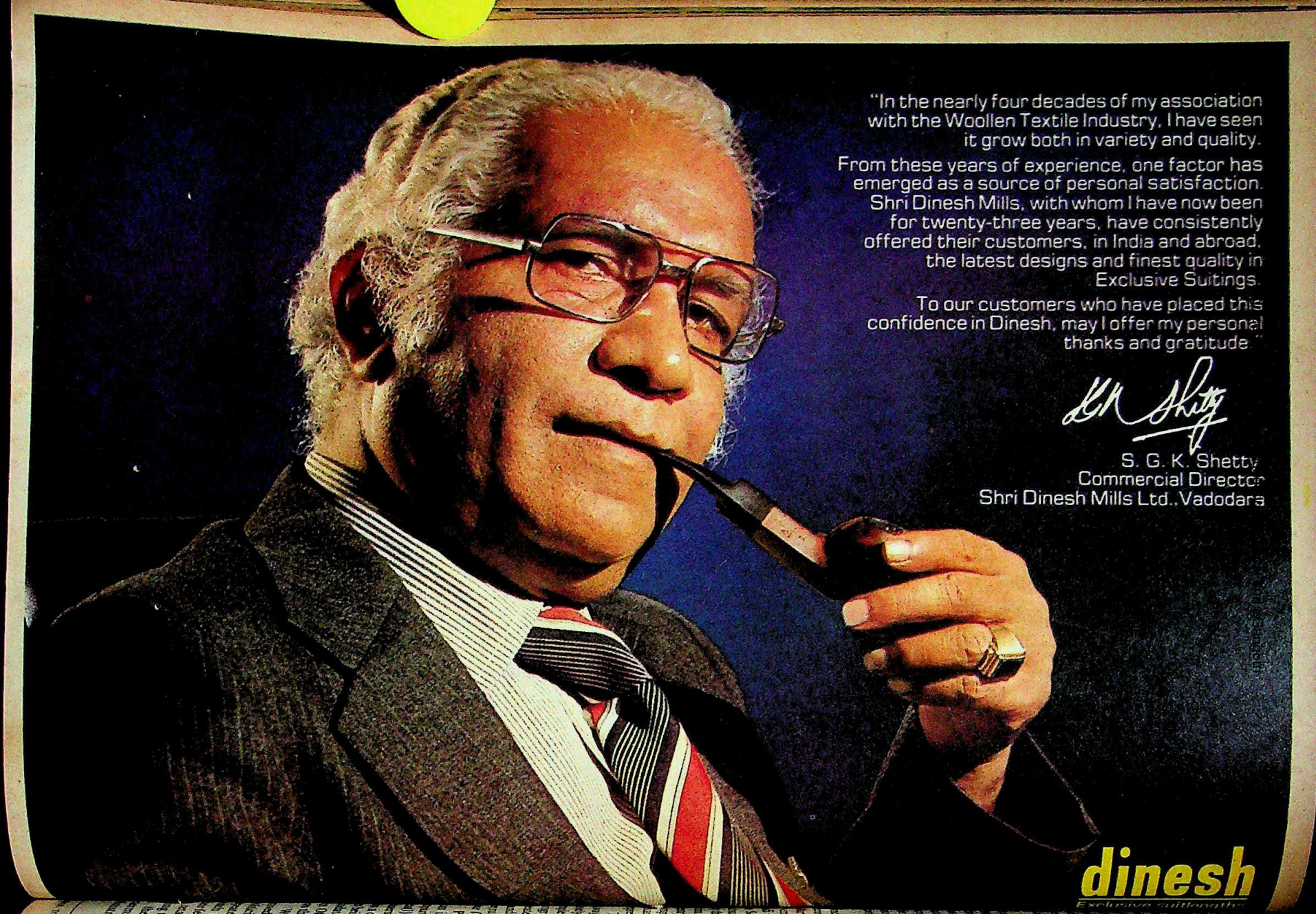
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...dent of the local panchayat, proudly told ...DAY how it had spent Rs 4.5 lakh on ...ployment work which included the ...ing of 14 tubewells and making arrange... ...for a minor irrigation scheme to water ...1,000 acres during the *boro* (summer ...season. Said he: "Initially we faced se... ...problems as we were not used to the in... ...ways of maintaining accounts, but we ...assisted by government people from ...ta and now we know the job."

Even the local press has been impressed. ...vey by the Calcutta-based Bengali daily ...Kal said: "Through continuous mass ...cts, the panchayat in Bankura district ...been able to create in people's minds ...ideas about what a self-reliant rural ...my should be." A villager confirmed ..."We never formulate a scheme without ...discussions with the people about their ...diate needs."

Interestingly enough, while the Singur ...hayat is headed by one who works as an ...ultant in Calcutta's prestigious La ...ière school, it includes people like ...Malik, a mason and Subal Ruhidar, a ... worker. As Planning Adviser Satyabra... ...pointed out: "Much of the noise ...panchayats in West Bengal is created ...the fact that they include representatives ...the lowest strata of society which the ...y cannot tolerate. No one hears any ...plaints about panchayats in Gujarat, for ...ce, as these are composed of ...sentatives of the upper classes."

The people in a poverty-ridden state are ...ys in need of relief which can be had ...y through these bodies. Through the ...mentation of various rural ...grammes, the panchayats were able to ...e in the last five years 303.33 lakh ...days of work, which meant providing ...rural poor with jobs for around 70 days a ...r for Rs 4.50 a day and 1 kg of cereals.

Political Importance: Though the Mar... ...sist that they have been absolutely ...artial while distributing jobs, the Cong...(I) maintains that "only Marxist sympa... ...are provided with jobs". Asked about ...a district official said: "With the resour... ...being limited, it is not possible to accom...date all and hence the charge of partisans... Of course in the matter of relief distribu... ...the human factor cannot be ignored."

Whether these charges are valid will be ...ed by the election results, as the highly ...cised villagers of West Bengal have ...eatedly shown that there is no way in ...h they can be prevented from making ...r feelings known. And if the Marxists fail ...ntain their position, they will have a ...t time ahead, as any gains will be used ...the Congress(I) to launch a more ...rmined struggle against the Left Front ...ministry.

—SUMANTA SEN

CALCUTTA

Metro Muddle

WITH the much talked about underground railway at Calcutta nearing completion, a fresh controversy has been sparked off at Metro Bhavan. The impending inauguration of the 3.5km line between Esplanade and Bhowanipur by the end of the year has suddenly focussed attention upon a vital issue —who will run the Metro? India's first ever underground railway will cost Rs 55 crore to Rs 60 crore to run annually —the revenue has not been worked out —and both the already burdened state Government and the Centre are shying away from accepting charge. Admits Metro Railway Manager

BIKASH DAS

The Metro tunnel: underground problems

K.N. Dasgupta: "It is true the railways are the best equipped to run it, but I think we should operate as somebody else's agents rather than shoulder the full responsibility."

Although the project was sanctioned 11 years ago, the work has been characterised all along by an attitude of "we will decide when we reach the final stage". Work began in 1973, and with money just trickling in, the target date of completion had to be moved ahead from the envisaged 1979 to 1988. Criticism from citizens, particularly those staying along the 16 km route of the entire project, was not slow in coming, as negotiating the narrow dug-up roads had become a continuous, and it seemed endless problem.

Indian Effort: The delay was, however, welcomed by the Metro officials. Confessed Dasgupta: "The delay came as a boon to us, as we were able to prepare ourselves more thoroughly for a job that was entirely new to us. We are proud of the fact that the first underground transport system is a thoroughly Indian effort, which it would not have been if we had to finish it in a hurry, as this would inevitably have led to dependence on foreign firms."

The manager's sense of pride is shared by his colleagues. Said A.K. Guha, engineer-in-charge of the tunnelling under Belgachia Road: "Three hundred people are working round the clock, building this 800 m long tunnel that will run 60 ft below the road. Yet the residents of this area are unaware that men are at work, under their floors, on a job entirely new to them, but which they have mastered through trial and error. The fact that a part of the tunnel will have to run under a canal makes the task even more tricky, but we will complete the operation by the 1985 target."

However, only a small part of the construction is being done using this expensive tunnelling method. It is largely the cut-and-cover method which involves the digging up of roads that has been used, adding to serious traffic problems in the congested city. The people at Metro Bhavan are only now waking up to the fact that it would have been much better to have an elevated Metro rail system, eliminating all the trouble of digging and tunnelling. In fact, learning a lesson from the Calcutta experience, authorities have proposed an elevated system for Madras.

Operational Hazards: Meanwhile, Calcuttans are already suffering the consequences of what appears to be an ill-advised operation —old buildings are beginning to develop cracks, or even sink due to the Metro work, and the over Rs 5 lakh paid in compensation has not satisfied the residents. Confronted with this aspect, Dasgupta pulled out a photostat copy of the *Hong Kong Standard* which had reported six fatalities due to Metro work in that city. Said Dasgupta: "There has not been a single such accident in Calcutta. And it must be remembered that the Hong Kong project is being carried out by experienced British firms. Ours is a wholly Indian effort, and every piece of equipment has been designed and manufactured within the country."

Calcutta citizens are worried that hawkers might infest the cool halls of the Metro when it is opened. Dasgupta retorts that it is up to the citizens themselves to keep their newest facility in good order. That seems to be a tall order in a city where the people seem to have grown indifferent to smells and dirt.

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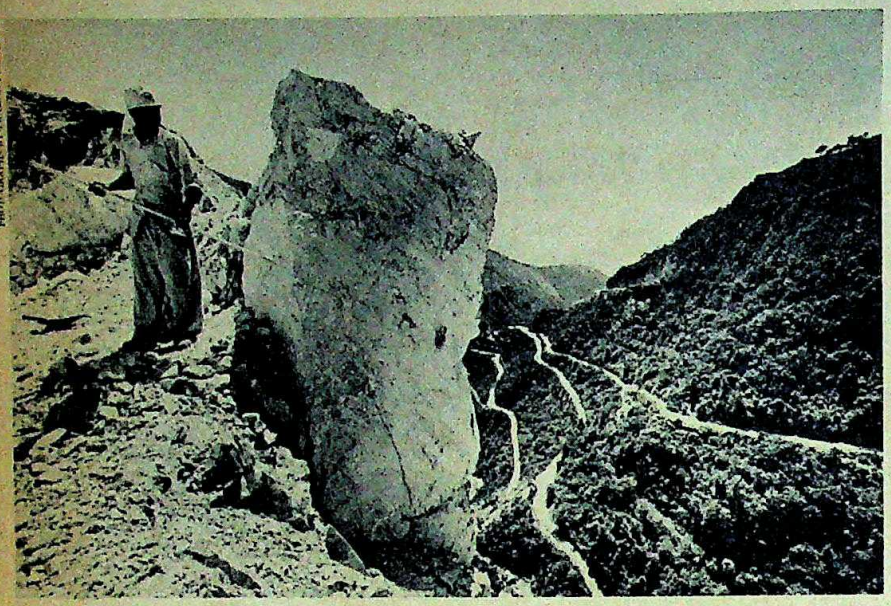

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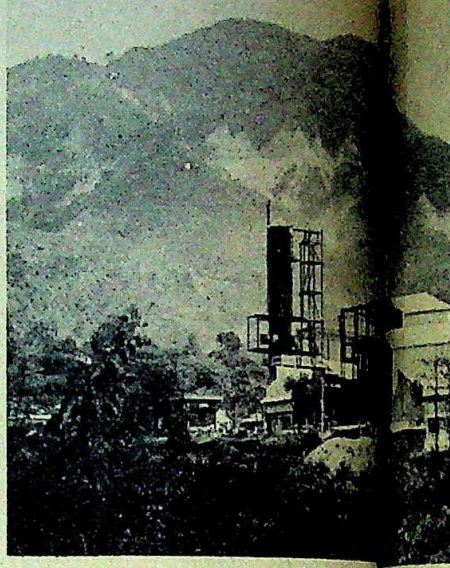

QUARRYING

The Doon Doom

A PALL of limestone dust hangs over the once verdant slopes of the Doon valley. Encouraged by the Uttar Pradesh Government's concern with developing 'industrially backward' Dehra Dun, scores of quarries and ancillary industries have sprung up to exploit the natural resources of the region. Although, as a belated sop to ecologists, Industry Minister Vir Bahadur Singh recently announced the state Government's "intention" to ban quarrying in the Mussoorie hills, the order is till now effectively limited to the non-renewal of old leases. Eighteen of the 61 quarry licencees were given three months, notice to close shop when they applied for renewal in December 1982. While the notice period expired on April 1, other quarries remain unaffected and the damage continues unabated. Said Mady Martyn, wife of a former headmaster of Doon School: "To declare Doon an industrially backward area is not as mad as it is bad. We have only one Doon to lose; and it is very nearly lost. The valley is unique in northern India—or was—for its mild climate, forests, wild animals and mountains. It is a small area of just about 30 miles width by 60 miles length. Why pick on Doon?"

The state Government's policy review was prompted by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's consternation at the ecological damage to the Doon's unique geophysical features during a helicopter trip to Mussoorie last July. From the air, the extent of the ugly brown and white scars due to the haphazard quarrying of limestone on the green slopes was alarmingly evident. Says Princess Sita of Kapurthala House, who heads a 'Save Mussoorie' campaign, and whose son Arun Singh is a confidant of Rajiv Gandhi's: "Mrs Gandhi hardly needed to be told what was happening. She could see for herself the damage that the quarries had wrought and she was appalled." Doon valley residents credit the prime minister's single trip with having had more impact than all the environment protection committees instituted earlier, notably the Doon Valley Board (DVB) set up by the Department of Environment in 1981.

In fact, with the impending closure hanging over everybody's head, mining of limestone has never been so hectic in the Mussoorie hills.

But what the Government gives with the right hand it takes away with the left. Says Jayanta Bandhopadhya, director of a Department of Environment project on Doon valley ecology: "The non-renewal of lease does not stop quarrying immediately. On the other hand, it may lead to excessive illegal quarrying which may be difficult for the Government to check unless all quarrying is stopped." Already, the official 1982–83 figure for limestone production is only half the estimated 8 lakh tonnes that were actually produced by the Doon valley quarries.

Hectic Activity: In fact, with the impending closure hanging over everybody's head, mining of limestone has never been so hectic in the Mussoorie hills. Many of the 18 affected licence holders have obtained temporary stay orders from the courts, and others continue to remove the stone illegally. According to bitter quarry owners, the non-renewal of 18 leases has placed responsible owners on par with those who, allegedly with political backing, have been ruthlessly exploiting the hills.

In fact, a special committee on quarrying set up by the state Government in the '70s, whose report has now been set aside, had recommended that while the well-run mines should continue functioning, all quarrying on the Mussoorie highway and the road to the Shastradhara sulphur springs should be stopped. However, while the licences of mines tucked away in the Bhatta valley and invisible from Mussoorie have been cancelled, two mines just off the main Mussoorie road have not been hampered. This despite their history of warnings and challans for violating safety regulations and for the damage to the highway.

Heavy Investment: The quarry owners are mostly former refugees from Pakistan who have invested heavily in roads, installing ropeways and modern equipment because their contract terms included the promise of lease renewal after 20 years. Says an aggrieved Mela Ram Marwah, owner of

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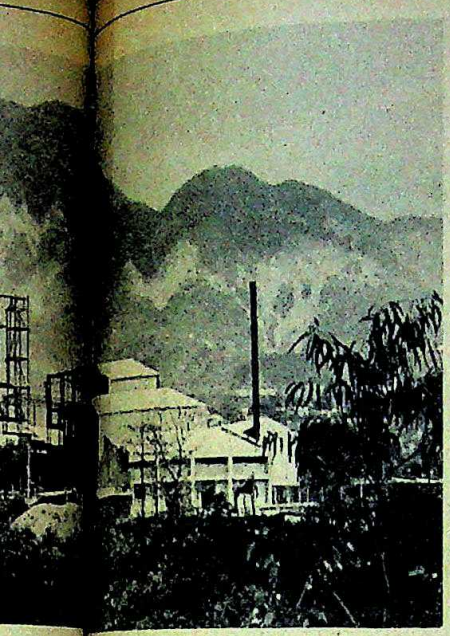


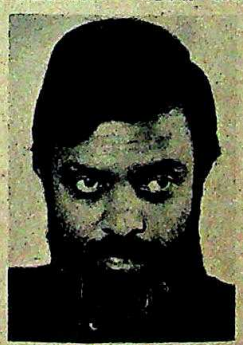
Limestone quarry in operation (above left); a new cement factory: alarming exploitation

high grade limestone found only in this region. The cement plants which can make do with very low grade limestone freely available elsewhere in India, are being justified on the ground that they will consume residue limestone from the carbide plant.

"You wouldn't want us to pollute the landscape by dumping the residue limestone down the hillside," said an Uttar Pradesh government official, seemingly unaware of the numerous kilns and small marble chip and crusher units in Dehra Dun which could use the waste stone. It is hardly surprising that there are seven applicants in the queue for cement plant licences and at least one for a paper factory.

SIGNS of man's ravages of the once idyllic environment are everywhere in Doon. Observes Bandhopadhya: "The crisis of Indian forestry can be seen very clearly in Doon, for the valley has a very clearly defined ecosystem." Over the last 30 to 40 years the sturdy forest oak has been gradually replaced by the more hardy pine. Gulab Ramchandani, headmaster of Doon School, who studied there between 1937 and 1974 recalls that "the dense woods of my childhood are no more." Although officially the area is supposed to have a tree cover of 60 per cent many feel that now not more than 12 per cent remains under forest.

The ecological decay has ruined the balmy climate of the valley. Old-timers recall that Dehra Dun had been classified as a 'non-fan station' by the army, but now fans are necessary every summer. The steadily rising temperature graph of Mussoorie is equally revealing. In 1950 the average maximum temperaure was 25.8°C, in 1960 27.7°C, in 1970 30.1°C and in 1980 32.2°C. With a water shortage every summer for the last few years most farmers have stopped cultivating the famed Doon basmati rice.



Bandhopadhya: pessimistic view

However, Pushpinder Maliah, managing director of a Dehra Dun calcium carbonate plant set up in 1975, fears that the entire hue and cry against mining is a "sinister game by bureaucrats and will lead ultimately to the nationalisation of limestone quarrying rather than a ban". The LQOA's memorandum to the Government noted that there was a proposal to lop off certain working areas from the private sector mining leases and add them to the UPSMDC lease.

Unpopular Policy: Already, the UPSMDC has grabbed the right of mining 1,500 acres, which is more than the combined lease rights of all 61 quarries. Complaints about the state mines are numerous since the UPSMDC sublets mining rights. Says Maliah: "The UPSMDC seems to be in no position to handle its quarries and is not maintaining either the quality nor the time schedules. If limestone quarrying is nationalised then prices will spiral upwards."

The problem, of course, is that the white Himalayan limestone with a unique purity of 99.2 per cent is too valuable a resource to ignore. It is an indispensable raw material for certain special steel industries, and for calcium carbonate and calcium carbide which form the base material of a variety of medicines, toothpastes and detergents. In fact, TISCO's new steel plant at Jamshedpur is said to be dependent on the Doon limestone with its low silica content and the Tatas recently placed an order for 3.20 lakh tonnes. They have also installed costly equipment to transport limestone from Harawala.

With the non-renewal of their suppliers' licences, Tata directors J.R.D. Tata and Russy Mody were worried enough to meet the prime minister. Said an emphatic Marwah: "You can grow trees anywhere you like but you can't grow minerals." Added another quarry owner Ved Prakash Chaudhary: "Sheep grazing does more damage to ecology than we do. Whether you plough a field or light a stove, some effect on the environment is inevitable. Are you going to block all progress?"

Haphazard Growth: The crux of the issue is not so much the blanket ban on quarrying as its unplanned development. A good indicator is the curious master plan for Dehra Dun that was drafted by the Uttar Pradesh Town and Country Planning Council (UPTCPC). The exercise has been going on since 1974 but it has still to be cleared by the state Government because the Central Department of Environment has reportedly come in the way. Recalls DVB member Mirchandani: "Last year we were shown the Dehra Dun master plan and we discovered to our horror that there were bright purple patches indicating the sanctioning of polluting industries in the most unlikely areas at the foot of the Mussoorie hills."

Political pressures seem responsible for the regularising of industries, lime kilns and crushers near scenic spots. While the UPTCPC had originally vetoed such industrial zones, the decision was later amended after a meeting of the Uttar Pradesh Council of Ministers. It was then decided that the industrial zones would be termed spot zones and the plants located there would have to be fitted with adeqeate equipment to ensure pollution control. However, the new cement plant has yet to be fitted with electrostatic precipitators. While the Bandhopadhya Committee will submit its report later this month, no simple solution is likely.

—COOMI KAPOOR in Dehra Dun

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All this has been largely due to MSIL's involvement and interest in the student community. This involvement has also resulted in the yearly 'Student of the Year Contest' and educational audio-visual programmes, conducted by MSIL.

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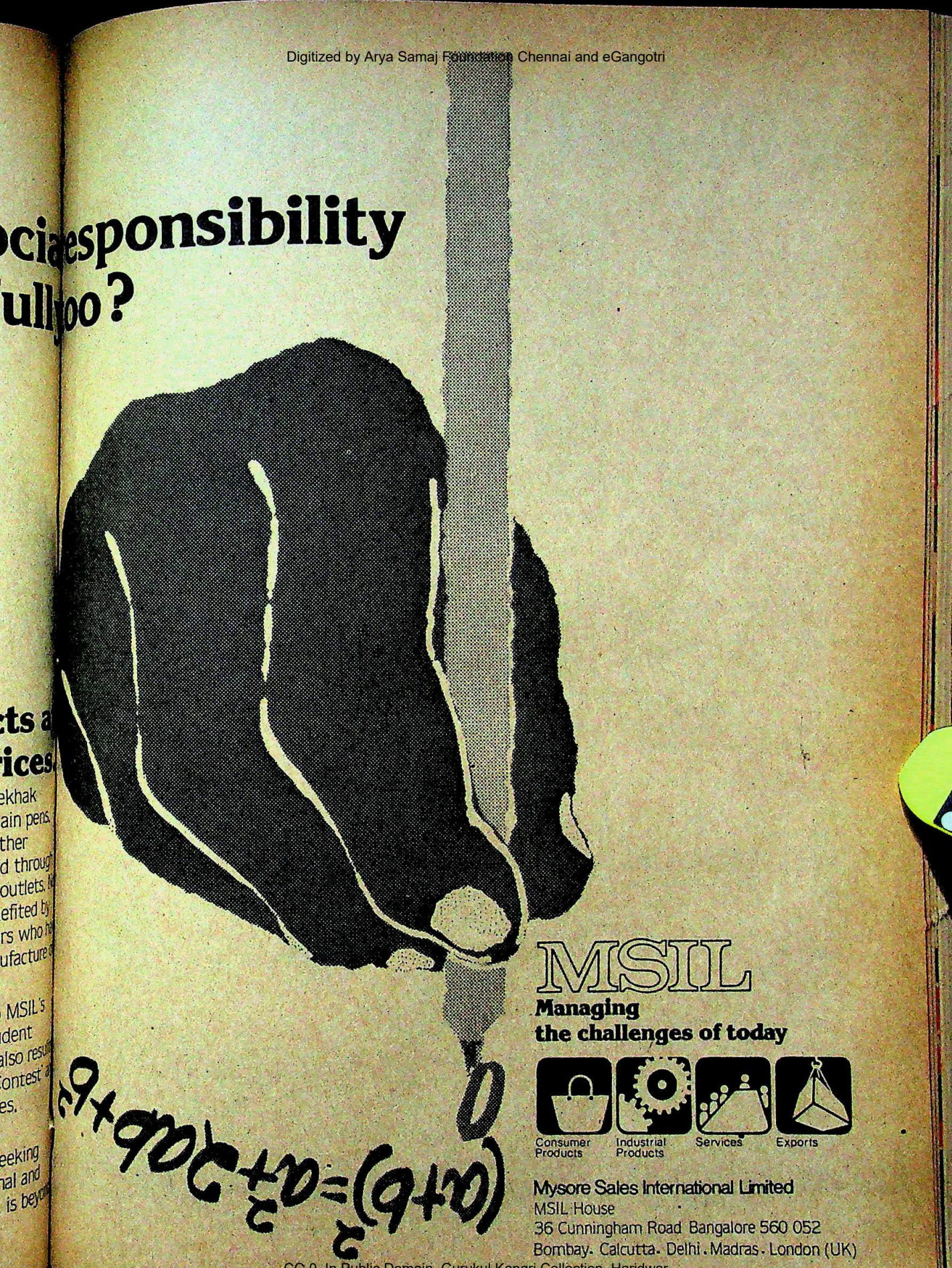
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MADHYA PRADESH

The Wages Of Hypocrisy

"The laws relating to payment of minimum wages to agricultural labour be reviewed and implemented effectiv
—Point number five of the New 20-point Programme.

THE PROGRAMME may be new, but the Minimum Wages Act has been in existence for precisely 35 years. And yet, after this span of time, for those workers who need it the most, its existence means little. A large number of agricultural labour are unaware of its existence; the ones who know are in no position to make their employers pay them their legitimate dues.

Madhya Pradesh presents the classic case of an Act not acted on. It has 48 lakh agricultural labour and a large number of them are not paid the statutory minimum wages, except during brief spells when the demand for hands in the field is high. The minimum wage is currently Rs 7.65 per day—linked to the cost of living index, it keeps fluctuating.

But do the very people who swear by the New 20-point Programme observe the laws they claim to uphold? In Chief Minister Arjun Singh's council of ministers, 21 out of 35 list their occupation as agriculture.

Bhopal Correspondent SREEKANT KHANDEKAR *went on an extensive tour of the state's eastern districts of Rajnandgaon, Durg, Raipur and Bilaspur for a fortnight and visited the villages of four ministers and one senior party functionary. His report:*

DR TUMANLAL, 49, is the minister for panchayats and rural development and has been elected to the Assembly for the fourth time. Tumanlal is, on the whole, fairly satisfied with the way things are in the field: "Of course, minimum wages should be paid to agricultural labour. And while a farmer might not be in a position to pay outright in cash at the end of each day, if you look at it in the larger perspective and include other amenities like shoes, blankets and vegetables..." he says; "...in my area all agricultural labour get above the minimum rate."

"Everyone is happy," he claims happily. "It is delightful to watch the labour sing together as they work. They don't have a very bad time—after all, they don't have to work for even eight hours in a day." Sipping coffee as the air-conditioner hums, Tumanlal is quite convinced that "things are not bad and the relations between the farmer and labour are quite cordial".

TUMANLAL'S village is Karela, 25 km from the district headquarters of Rajnandgaon. The sun blisters the handful of workers in the fields and the 60-odd huts that make up the settlement. In the centre of the mud houses stands a bungalow—Tumanlal's bungalow. In the village, residents say that the normal rate of payment is *ek katha dhan* per day (that is, about 3 kg of paddy). Calculated at the prevailing price of paddy, this means anywhere between Rs 4 to Rs 5 per day.

Managing the roughly 100-acre family farm is Bhuneswar, a nervous young man who is the minister's son. Bhuneswar does not contradict the underpayment of labourers. Normally, he says, the rate varies from Rs 4 to Rs 6 per day.

The family has about half a dozen *charwahas*, men who are employed on a round-the-year basis at the end of which they can, on mutual agreement, enter into a fresh year-long contract. According to one of them, the monthly payment works out to about 90 kg of paddy which, even at Rs 1.60 per kg, means Rs 144 per month. For the *charwahas*, the day starts at dawn; they work until noon, then take a three-hour break, followed again by work from three in the afternoon till seven in the evening: a total of 11 hours a d

Bhuneswar also admits to an appa practice that exists in the Chhattisgar gion: a *charwaha* is considered bough the entire year. If there is no work o farm, his master may send him to work where. And his earnings have to be ha over to his master. But, says Tuma everyone is happy.

RAM GOPAL Tiwari, m ber of Parliament and p dent of the state Congress unit, is also very straigh ward about the conditions Chhattisgarh: "The law breached rather than obs ved. That is because the farmers' resources very meagre: the price of paddy is not very r munerative. And the labourers dare not co plain because they have tomorrow to wor about."

Does he know how things are on his own farm? And the fact that the minimum not being paid? Answers Tiwari: "I have man who manages the farm so I am not rea aware, since I am away most of the time. If it is true, I will certainly see that the matter corrected. But so far I have never received a

Labourers on Dr Tumanlal's farm in Karela: underpaid and overworked:

SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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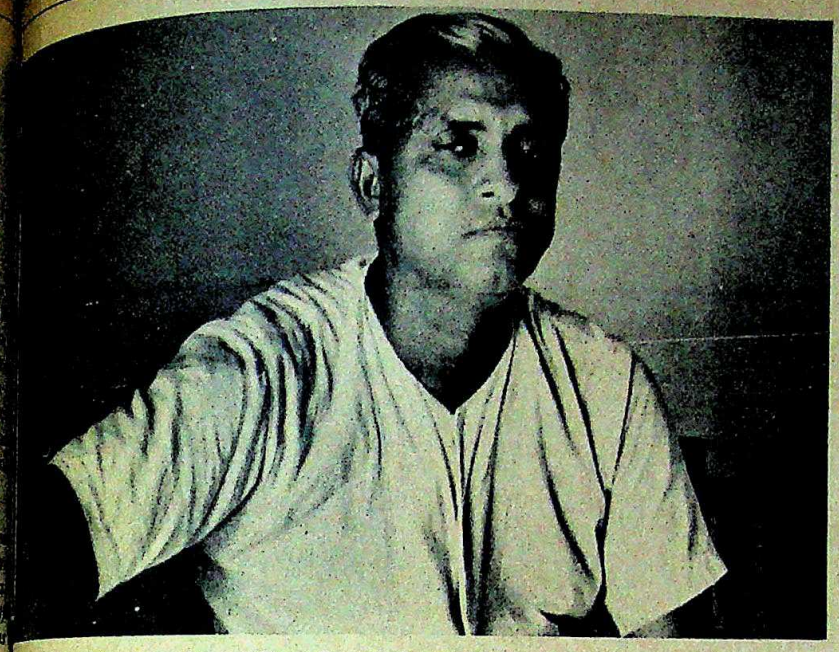


Ram Sharan Tiwari, nephew of Ram Gopal Tiwari: "Why should we pay any different?"

...plaints of this nature." But as Tiwari him-... says, how can the labourer dare complain?

TIWARI is the resident of Loharsi, a very ... large village with a population of 5,000. ...e sarpanch is Ram Sharan Tiwari, a hand-...me, articulate, middle-aged man who is ...m Gopal Tiwari's nephew. He goes into a ...ng tirade about the state of the administra-...n—the school without a building, the ...alth unit without a doctor, the fields ...thout water. According to him, the lot of ...e labourer is so bad that in May, half the ...llage had emptied out, migrated.

He says that his uncle's family has 70 ...res in Loharsi, and another 150 acres in a ...arby village, Jewra. What is the normal ...ily wage paid in Loharsi? "Three to four ...pees," says Ram Sharan promptly. Does ...uncle pay the same rate or does he pay the ...atutory minimum? Ram Sharan laughs: ...f course he pays the same rate like every-...ne else. In fact, in the entire village the rate ...the same, so why would he pay any ...fferent?" Yes, why indeed?

VIJAY Guru, minister of state for food, short and stocky at 32, has been in Arjun Singh's council of ministers for just over six months. Apart from being a minister, Guru is the religious ...der of the Satnami Harijans who number ...e 90 lakh country-wide. And about 40 per ...t of that number reside in Chhattisgarh. ...Guru is very frank about the state of ...ture: "Agriculture is simply not an econo-...proposition. There is no guarantee about the weather, whether a crop will be good. Moreover, over the years, the prices of inputs have risen rapidly but the increase in the price of paddy is not proportionate. Yes, payment of minimum wages is possible but only if irrigation facilties exist."

What about his own village? Are the minimum wages paid? Guru does not answer the question directly but admits that wages are low there. "Four or five years back though," he recalls, "during the sowing season, they had gone as high as Rs 8.50 per day."

GURU'S village is Khadua, about 2 km from Simga, situated on the Bilaspur-Raipur road. Guru's family is one of the four in the 700-strong village which has a slightly large farm. According to the family *mukhtiar* (who oversees field operations), they have 70 acres, of which only 25 acres is irrigated by a well.

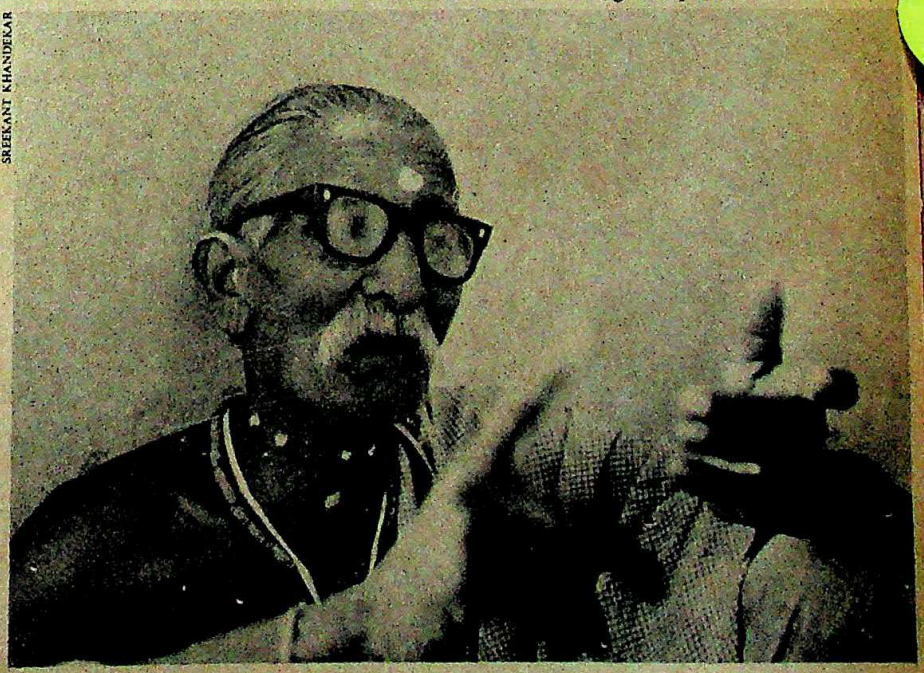
Says the *mukhtiar* as he squats on the floor: "The situation is bad for labour. That is why several dozen people migrate soon after harvesting paddy and move to the north." According to him, "even during the paddy season, men are paid *ek katha dhan* —and even then everyone does not get that much. And off season, the rates plunge to about Rs 2.50 for women and Rs 3.50 for men."

The *mukhtiar* speaks without inhibition, probably because he is not even aware that the Minimum Wages Act exists. He says that the Guru household, over the years, has almost always employed men on a round-the-year basis. The rate? "Now it works out to about Rs 130 per month (Rs 4.30 per day); but just a year or two back it was about Rs 110 to Rs 115 (Rs 3.80 per day). Yes, things are quite bad," he repeats.

JHUMUKLAL Bhedia, 52, the short and bespectacled minister of industries, seems to feel quite strongly about the payment of minimum wages: "Farmers must pay: after all the Government provides loans, irrigation, fertilisers, seeds. The problem occurs only when the rains fail

The *mukhtiar* at Guru's farm in Khadua: "Things are quite bad"

SREEKANT KHANDEKAR



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because the farmer has no margin to allow for calamities. That is why minimum wages are sometimes not paid. Apart from times of calamities, there is no reason for underpayment of wages."

Is he aware that the Minimum Wages Act is ignored at his family farm in Durg district? Bhedia pauses. "I'm not aware if this is so."

PIPARCHEDI is a fairly large and reasonably well-off village, some 20 km from the tehsil town of Balod in Durg district. It is lucky because the water from a nearby reservoir swirls along a canal neighbouring the village. Adjacent to the canal are the fields of the Bhedia family. And the village has three tube-wells too, so some work goes on even in the summer.

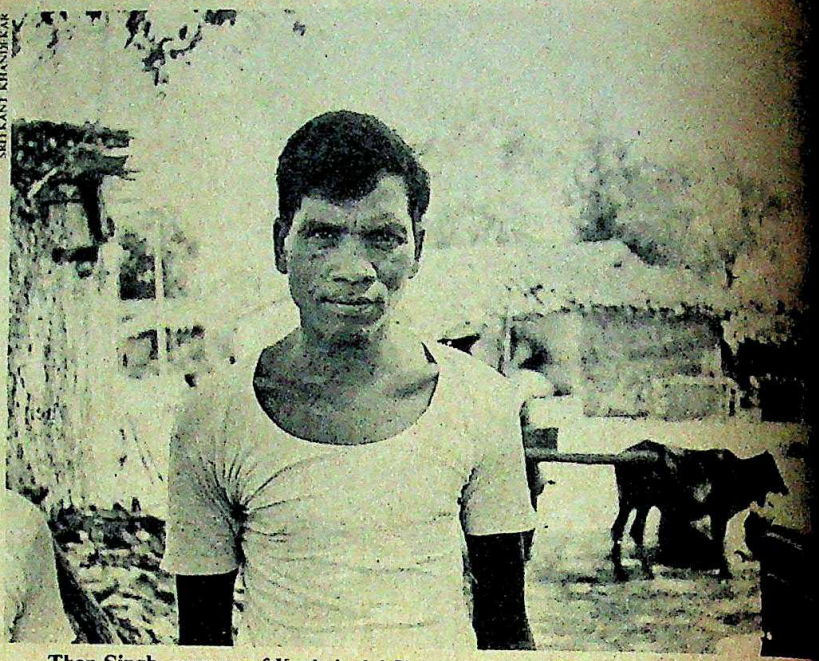
It is not easy to get people to talk in Piparchedi: the moment the subject of wages comes up they turn wary, mumble apologetically and move away. There is no doubting the power that the Bhedias exercise.

In the neighbouring village of Bhedia Nawagoan, villagers are slightly more relaxed but still prefer to remain anonymous. Returning from Piparchedi at dusk, a young woman grumbles about the wage being only a paltry Rs 3. Her companion joins in: "Everything changes. But our wages don't." The Bhedias are not the only ones there who pay the women badly. Says Ram Lal, a resident of Bhedia Nawagoan: "It is normal practice to pay women Rs 1.50 to Rs 2 less than the men in this area." The minister's family is conforming to an age-old practice.

KANHAIYALAL Sharma, 56, tall and bespectacled, is Madhya Pradesh's minister for general administration. Says he: "By and large, I would say that exploitation of agricultural labour is nominal. And if it exists, that is in the off season when there is not much work in the fields." Talking of his own farming, Sharma says positively: "No question of underpayment on my farm. How can a minister afford to do that?"

SHARMA hails from Chichpol, a tiny village in Raipur district. In his absence the man in charge is Than Singh and his loyalty to the minister is apparent at first meeting. The Sharmas own in all about 50 acres of land. Says Than Singh: "On an average a *khamiya* (like a *charwaha*, a person employed on a yearly basis) is paid 16 sacks of paddy. This means about 1,200 kg. Plus, he gets Rs 100 in cash. So, all in all, it works out to between Rs 1,800 and Rs 2,000 for a year's work(or Rs 5 to Rs 5.50 per day)."

Off season, says Than Singh, the daily rate varies from 2.5 kg to 3 kg of paddy (or Rs 4 to Rs 4.80 per day). Says he: "Some people even prefer to work on the fields rather than in government projects off season, although our rates are lower. Poverty is so great that they would rather earn less, as long as they get their grain at the end of the day on a daily basis."



SRIKANT KHANDEKAR

Than Singh, overseer of Kanhaiyalal Sharma's farm: "They would rather earn less"

IF RULING party leaders themselves choose to underpay, it is certainly not because they can't afford to pay adequately. It is reflective instead of a general couldn't care-less attitude. And it exposes their hypocrisy more than anything else.

Ever since the Act came into force, the administration's attitude has been like that of its ministers. According to the 1981 census, the state has 48 lakh agricultural labourers spread in about 77,000 villages over 4.42 lakh square kilometres. Says Principal Secretary L.K. Malhotra who looks after the Department of Labour: "The task of making inspections in rural areas is simply enormous."

But only now is the Government slowly stirring to size up the problem. Until recently, there were 125 labour inspectors statewide of whom, incredibly enough, only 25 devoted their time exclusively to checking wages in rural Madhya Pradesh. So then, on an average, each of these men had nearly 2 lakh labourers to oversee, spread over 3,000 villages and 17,700 square kilometres. An impossible task that no one succeeded in accomplishing.

Now, however, 80 inspectors are going to be posted in the problem districts of Sarguja, Raigarh, Bilaspur and Raipur: each man will have to oversee work in one blo Madhya Pradesh has 459 blocks, so th barely a beginning. The state Governme plea is shortage of funds and it has re tedly approached the Centre for assista

Powers of inspection have been del ted to various officials—including block velopment officers, revenue inspectors, tehsildars, panchayat inspectors—but brought no results. Figures prove th Labour inspectors carried out 8,978 insp tions between April 1982 and January and detected underpayment of Rs 1.37 This amount was restored to the labou

It is a ridiculously small amount even if, say, 10 lakh labourers were paid one rupee less for a single day, the un payment would amount to Rs 10 lakh. the year, the figure would run into sev crores. But even more unbelievable is the derpayment detected by the vast army of ficials who have been delegated powers of spection: in the same 10-month period made 844 inspections to recover Rs 2.

A judgement of the Supreme Cour 1958 reads: "Living wage should enable main earner to provide for himself and family not merely the bare essentials of f clothing and shelter but a measure of in comfort including education for the dren, protection against ill-health, re rement of essential social needs and a me re of insurance against the more impor misfortunes, including old age."

Twenty-five years later, mini —those representatives of the people probably are unaware of how their own labourers live.

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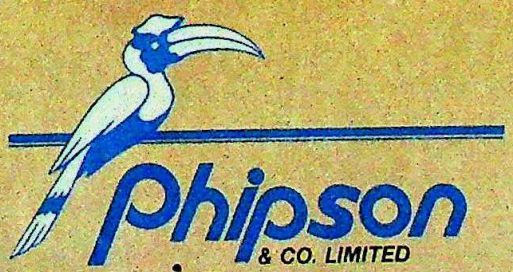

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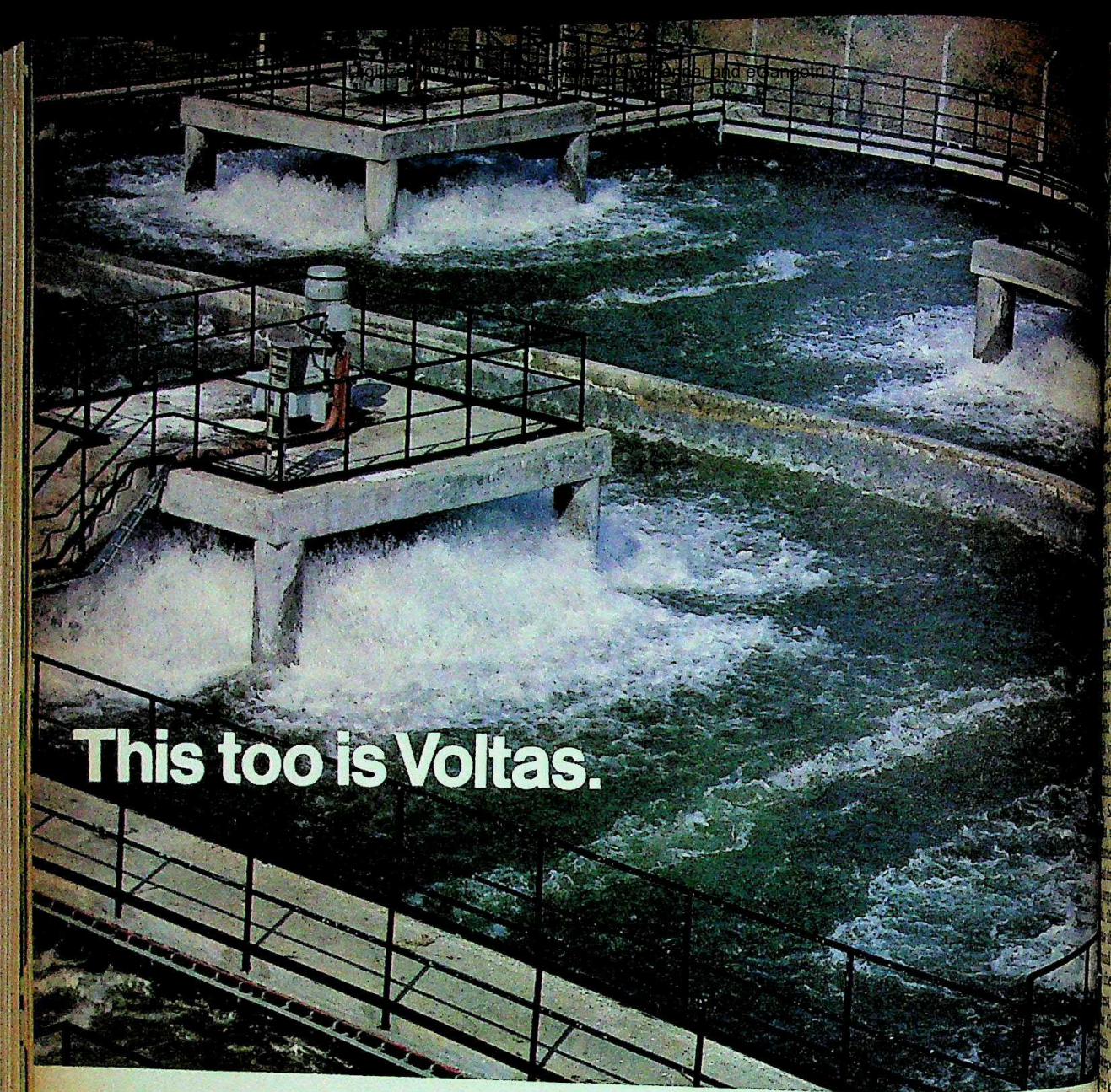

Pollution control—to clean your environment

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an-eater enace

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SANJEEV PREMI

Victim Shanker and (above) Ashok Singh: growing menace

HE SCENARIO is straight out of a Jim Corbett novel. Man-eaters prowling through the jungles in search of prey, terrified screams in the night hunters tracking blood spoors through forests. Except that the scene is frighte- real and so are the man-eaters stalking in the dense forests of Lakhimpur surrounding the famous Dudwa Park. Already, by last fortnight, attacks had increased in intensity total- in the past four months. The first was February, when Shiv Shankar, a night man at Toja Farm bordering the forests was attacked by a tiger. His was saved only because the overturned set the grass on fire. Incredibly, the Shankar who returned to his village kilometres away to recover from the was attacked again by a man-eater cutting cane in broad daylight and in view of a dozen other farm workers. survived, not without a severe ng.

Sarabjit Kaur, 18, was not so fortunate. month, while working alongside her , the man-eater suddenly appeared dragged her into the sugar-cane. Despite crowd on tractors firing guns into the the man-eater dragged the girl deeper the forest where her remains were later The attacks form a chilling pattern. the same time last year, Uma Shankar, a guard, disappeared. No trace of him found except for a thigh bone picked Two more victims, Gangajali, a park , and Asghar Ali, a grass cutter, killed by a tiger in the park. Forest offi- blamed Tara, the tigress reared by known author and conservationist Billy Singh, for the kills and held her res- ble for at least 21 others. But Tara was down in November 1980, and the kills have continued and, in the bargain, unleashed a hotly-debated controversy over the cause for the increasing menace.

Alarming Increase: Since 1977, when the Dudwa Park was established, the number of man-eater victims in the area has been as alarmingly high as 111 with 18 of these being killed within the park boundaries. Says Billy Arjun Singh: "The royal tiger's natural habitat has been violated and encroached upon, their water-holes are drying up, their roaming grounds have shrunk and their prey species rapidly dwindling. I am surprised how the park is being managed. We have illegal cattle grazing, illegal poaching, illegal felling of timber and the real culprits are rarely caught."

Vijay Bahadur Singh, the state's chief wildlife warden expressed equal concern when he visited Dudwa last fortnight for a spot study of the man-eater menace. "Rapid and unchecked changes in the land use pattern is vitally linked with the aggravation of the problem," he said. Quoting from a 40-page report on the subject submitted by a special committee set up at the recommendation of the Indian Wildlife Board, Singh added: "It's a classic case of ecological boomeranging." Ashok Singh, 44, the park director, offers a more historical perspective of the problem. "Soon after Partition and the abolition of the zamindari system, large chunks of these areas were given out for the rehabilitation of Sikh refugees thereby fragmenting the wild natural forest belts in the Terai region. Now, with more than 800sq km under extensive sugar-cane cultivation, the cane fields have come almost within the 123 sq km buffer zone of the park making it totally ineffective."

Both Ashok Singh and Billy Arjun Singh insist that a much wider buffer zone would curb the menace. Arjun Singh also would like to see the park ringed by an electric fence. But they differ on the question of whether the tiger population is surplus. Ashok Singh maintains that the resident tiger population having crossed 60 last year, the park area is just not big enough. "Dudwa has at best a carrying capacity of maximum 45 predators," he says, "and the extra tigers are moving into an artificial alternate habitat of the sugar-cane farms at the periphery."

Unanimous Opinion: There is unanimous opinion that the only solution is to restore the ecological balance by pushing back the farmland and reclaiming the lost river beds and low swampy areas which offer ideal breeding conditions for the tigers' natural prey like swamp deer.

Meanwhile, of the 10 declared man-eaters in the district, seven have been shot and one captured alive. Which leaves two more prowling the 490 sq km of the park as well as its surrounding areas. One consolation is that almost all the kills have been between December and April, when the cane is harvested. But that is cold comfort to the irate villagers. The recommendations of the Indian Wildlife Board committee, if implemented immediately, can possibly ease the crisis. Among its recommendations are:

- cattle-proof trenches and a five-mile wide cane free buffer zone around the park;
- electrical impulsers mounted on the wire fencing along the buffer area;
- the creation of a larger tiger reserve combining two additional core blocks in south Kheri and Pilibhit linked by a kilometre-wide corridor;
- providing rehabilitation facilities to affected villagers by releasing forest land.

The villagers and political aspirants have threatened to kill any tiger found wandering in the cane fields and local politicians are already pledging their support. Without prompt action, either the human death toll will continue to rise or the once-feared tiger will become the hunted instead of the hunter. —ANAND SAGAR in Dudwa

Hunters tracking the man-eater and (above) Billy Arjun Singh: future shock

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KARNATAKA

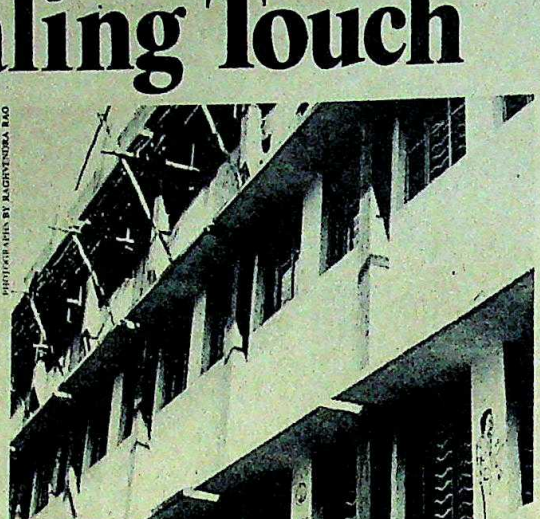
The Healing Touch

THE LINE usually reads, 'There's no business like show business.' In Karnataka, however, 'there's no business like medical education.' Last fortnight, as admissions began to medical colleges in the state, eight privately-run colleges were getting set to collect more than Rs 10 crore as capitation fees from over 600 students admitted to the first year of the five-year MBBS course. The trading in seats is perfectly legal: Karnataka is one of three states which permit the parents and guardians of aspiring doctors to buy seats, at rates which range from Rs 60,000 for a local resident to Rs 3.25 lakh for a foreigner. Says Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde: "The amount involved is massive. I wish I was able to collect so much money for the state Government without much effort."

The capitation fee business is smoothly regulated. The M.S. Ramaiah Medical College in Bangalore, run by the Gokula Educational Foundation, issues set forms which the parents then fill up. Last month, for instance, Dr A.B. Patra of Burdwan, West Bengal, filled up two forms, "of my own free will", stating that he was paying Rs 1 lakh "as donation" and another Rs 1 lakh for the hospital building. Dr Patra's son, Suchindran Patra, with 57.8 per cent marks in the higher secondary examination, was thus assured admission to the MBBS course.

Elsewhere, Rajiv Dang, the son of a company executive from Pune, with 60 per cent marks, was admitted into the Dr B.R. Ambedkar Medical College, Bangalore, after his parents had paid Rs 1.60 lakh into the college's coffers. Earlier, the college had welcomed into its fold Shahina Javeed, whose parents are in the US, for Rs 80,000. There were hundreds of other students who would secure admission after paying such princely sums for the privilege. The state Government estimates that the private medical colleges have collected Rs 30 crore in the last five years.

Merit Discarded: The immediate result of the capitation fee system is that merit becomes a casualty. Last year, in the general category, the four government-run colleges accepted only the first few hundred students on the list—the last of these scored 91 per cent marks. The private colleges admitted students with 45 per cent marks—after they paid the capitation fee. The average marks percentage of students admitted to three private colleges of Bangalore Ramaiah, Ambedkar and the Kempegowda Institute of Medical Sciences is 63 per cent as against 74 per cent in government colleges. Another factor is that 68 per cent of the seats in the government colleges are reserved for Scheduled Castes, backward classes and other weaker sections of society, which means that students with very high marks from affluent families take recourse to the private institutions. Admits a senior faculty member of a private college: "Most of the students are here not because of merit but because of their parents' money."



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAGHVENDRA RAO

The Kempegowda Institute: inadequate facilities

The immediate result of the capitation fee system is that merit becomes a casualty. Last year, in the general category, the four government-run colleges accepted only the first few hundred students on the list—the last of these scored 91 per cent marks. The private colleges admitted students with 45 per cent marks—after they paid the capitation fee.

The capitation fees are not all. In December 1980, the state Government told private college managements that "10 per cent of the seats shall be reserved for government without any capitation fee. The remaining 90 per cent may be filled up by the managements". The "10 per cent of the seats" were taken mostly by the sons, daughters and protégés of ministers and ruling party legislators and MP's (*see box*), who thus saved over Rs 60 lakh annually by securing seats without paying the capitation fees.

At times, the situation verges on the ludicrous. A letter to the principal of the Ambedkar Medical College directed him to admit the "cousin sister" of Ghulam Nabi Azad, MP, president of Indian Youth Congress(I), New Delhi. The candidate's name will be sent shortly". The candidate in question, Pamposh Naheed Azad, had secured only 53 per cent marks. The managements, it seemed, were only too eager to oblige Azad and other powerful people because they were offering between Rs 1.50 crore and Rs 2 crore a year by filling up the "remaining 90 per cent seats".

College Boom: Predictably, the capitation fee system has led to a boom in medical education in Karnataka. The number of medical colleges rose from seven in 1978–79 to 12 in 1982–83—the five new colleges were all privately-run. The number of seats in these shot up by 50 per cent in the same period—enabling them to collect an extra Rs 3 crore in capitation fees—while the number of seats in the government-run colleges of Bangalore, Mysore, Hubli and Bellary rose by only 15 per cent, from 400 to 460. In fact, Karnataka now boasts of a medical college for 25 lakh population, as figures for Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra are 70 lakh and 75 lakh; the national average is one college for 80 lakh population.

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Despite the boom, most of the colleges ...not been able to offer facilities on par ...the huge sums they collect. The Kempe... Institute operates out of a cramped ...storey building. The Ambedkar Medi... College, similarly, is housed in a ...storey building. The Ramaiah ...cal College is at present also ...ed in a two-storey building; ...ever, it is constructing a college ...hospital on a 70-acre plot about ...from Bangalore.

As none of the private colleges in ...alore has its own hospital, the ...Government has permitted them ...three city hospitals for clinical ...ce. Says a government doctor: ...is is the only state in the country ...private colleges are using go... hospitals, are not paying ...ing for this facility and, yet, are ...ed to charge capitation fees."

Poor Facilities: Students are ...to the government hospitals in ..., travelling an average of 6 km to ...destination every day. Most of ...stay in private shared accommo... in the city. According to Medi... Council of India (MCI) rules, the ...ts should live near the hospital ...that they can receive proper clinical ...g. The lack of facilities, espe... hostel accommodation, is ...felt by the students. Said a stu... leader of Ambedkar Medical ...ge: "It is an apology for a medical ...tion. They have collected Rs 3 ..., but where are the facilities?" In ..., the large number of complaints ...the colleges led the MCI to refuse them ...temporary recognition. Despite repea... requests from the colleges and the state ...Department, the MCI has not sent its ...ction teams, opposed as it is to the very ...of colleges being run in dilapidated buil...

The college managements are vocife... in defending the system. Says M.R. ...ram, chairman of the M.S. Ramaiah ...ical College: "If the people are willing to ...for their own education which the ...ernment cannot provide, what is wrong ...this? I am building one of the best ho... and colleges in the country with the ...ents' money." Adds M.H. Marigowda, ...ident of the Kempegowda Institute: "If ...body can teach us how to run a medical ...e effectively without money, I will sur... all the money collected as capitation ...By spending 300 per cent more than what ...end the Government has failed to pro... basic facilities in their colleges. We are ...ely giving better education."

Dr N.T. Mohan, founder chairman-...principal of the Ambedkar Medical College, has another argument. Says he: "The idea behind the capitation fee is not to make money but to create additional medical facilities for the poor at the expense of the rich. After all, all the seats are not filled by charging fees. We don't charge money from Scheduled Caste and other weaker communities. If we don't open colleges for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, they will not grow in the society." Mohan should know what he is talking about. Ambedkar was opened exclusively for Scheduled Caste students, but out of the 300-odd students it has admitted in the last three years, it has given berths to only 31 from that category. The vast majority of Ambedkar's students have paid capitation fees.

"If somebody can teach us how to run a medical college effectively without money I will surrender all the money collected as capitation fee. By spending 300 per cent more than what we spend the Government has failed to provide basic facilities in their colleges. We are definitely giving better education."

—M.H. MARIGOWDA, president, Kempegowda Institute of Medical Sciences

Education Politics: The private medical colleges could not themselves have grown without their enduring political connections. The Ananda Educational Trust, which runs the Ambedkar Medical College, was given permission to admit students only when C.M. Arumugham, a legislator close to the then chief minister R. Gundu Rao, was made chairman of the college's governing council. In fact, one of the items discussed at the seventh meeting of the governing body of the trust on July 7, 1980, was the "chief minister's suggestion to nominate Sh. C.M. Arumugham, MLA, as chairman of the governing council". Admits Principal Mohan: "Since we were all government officials we wanted non-officials to present our case. We co-opted Arumugham and the then education minister Mallikarjun Kharge as governing council members to plead our case with the Government. We ultimately got the permission."

The other two Bangalore-based colleges also have solid political backing in the state. Chairman Jayaram of Ramaiah Medical College was a Congress MLA until 1976, when he resigned his seat. In 1978, he contested the assembly elections from Bangalore as a Janata Party candidate, but did not win. However, his political connections have in no way weakened with his defeat. The Kempegowda Institute is run by the Vokkaliga Sangha, which is an organisation of the politically powerful Vokkaliga community.

The colleges were opened to cater to the affluent Indians living abroad and the rich business elite of the country. According to Education Department estimates, over 80 per cent of students studying in Ramaiah, Ambedkar and Kempegowda are from outside Karnataka and 40 per cent of these have come from abroad. The Central Government legitimised the capitation fee system when, in 1980, it began sponsoring foreigners for various government medical colleges after charging $40,000 (Rs 4 lakh). Under this scheme, over 30 students have been admitted to various colleges. Argues Jayaram: "If the Government can charge money for seats in the name of importing equipment, why can't we?"

POLITICS and private medical education have gone hand in hand in Karnataka ever since the Pai family—among them the late Union industry minister T.A. Pai—opened a medical college in Manipal in 1953. They opened another in Mangalore in 1977. The success of the Manipal college and hospital encouraged others. The late Devraj Urs, when he became chief minister, sifted 20 applications received between 1978 and 1980; he permitted the Gokula Educational Foundation to start the Ramaiah Medical College with 100 seats—the Ramaiahs are a backward community, and backward communities were the source of Urs's political strength. By the time the college started admissions—which it was allowed to do with retrospective effect for the previous academic session of 1979-80 instead of 1980-81—massive defections ousted Urs and Gundu Rao became chief minister.

Gundu Rao cleared two more applica-

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tions—those of the Scheduled Caste-dominated Ananda Educational Trust and the Vokkaliga Sangha, for Bangalore colleges, despite objections from expert committees. Applications for colleges in other parts of Karnataka—from the General Practitioners Association in Hubli, the Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Medical College in Mysore, the Karnataka Law Society in Belgaum, the Raghavendra Education Trust in Raichur and the Guru Nanak Dev Medical College in Bidar—were rejected. Opposition leaders accused Gundu Rao of favouring Bangalore trusts because the colleges would then attract wealthy parents and guardians, who would prefer to send their wards to Bangalore rather than to an obscure town. The state Government also armed itself with powers to sponsor 10 candidates in each new college.

Judicious Sponsorship: The chief minister stifled embarrassing criticism from members of his own party by obliging with the wards of chief ministers and party bearers from Haryana, Uttar Pra Kerala and Jammu & Kashmir. He sponsored the relatives of officials wo with the prime minister and Central Ca ministers. Said Gundu Rao: "I took a decisions on the basis of reports which put up to me and I stand by whatever

ADMISSIONS

Favoured Few

STUDENTS in the general category who cannot get into government colleges because they have not obtained the requisite 91 per cent marks or more, and whose families cannot find the money to pay capitation fees, should not despair. Exploiting the provision that 10 per cent of the seats are at the state Government's disposal, chief ministers, ministers and leading politicians have secured their protégés a berth. Examples:

• Rajendra Narayana Sharma, 56.6 per cent marks, admitted to Ambedkar Medical College for 1981–82. He is the son of Ram Kishore Sharma, Mrs Gandhi's security officer.

• Siddharth Rai, 70 per cent marks, sponsored by the Karnataka government in an order dated August 1982, for admission to the Kempegowda Institute of Medical Sciences. Rai is related to Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Kalpanath Rai and was recommended by the minister.

• Prabhat Kumar Singh, 56.6 per cent marks, admitted to Ambedkar Medical College courtesy the state Health Department's letter dated October 13, 1981. Prabhat is the son of V.P. Singh, the then Uttar Pradesh chief minister and had been recommended by Union minister Rai.

• A.G. Pradeep, admitted to Ramaiah Medical College for 1980–81. He is the son of A.N. Gopalakrishnaiah Pillai, a close associate of Kerala Chief Minister K. Karunakaran; his candidature was sponsored by Gundu Rao following a formal request by Karunakaran.

• M.K. Muneer, 52 per cent marks, admitted to Ambedkar Medical College in 1981, following a letter dated October 13, 1981, written by Gundu Rao's joint secretary K.P. Pandey to the college principal. Muneer is the son of C.H. Mohammed Koya, deputy chief minister of Kerala.

• K.M. Geetha, 54 per cent marks, admitted to the Ambedkar Medical College as a state government nominee during 1981–82. She is the daughter of K.M. Mallanna, president of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee(I).

• M.K. Dinesh Kumar, sponsored for admission to the Ambedkar Medical College according to a government order signed by B.G. Bassappa, under-secretary, health, Karnataka government. Kumar is the son of M.P. Gangadharan, Kerala's irrigation minister.

• B.K. Sujani, 66 per cent marks, recommended for admission to Ramaiah Medical College for 1982–83 by B.K. Hariprashad, former chairman of the Karnataka Slum Clearance Board.

• N. Yoheeswaran, 62 per cent marks, admitted to the Ramaiah Medical College for 1981–82. The son of Dr K.M. Nalleswami, Yoheeswaran's name, according to government records, was recommended by Mrs M. Chandrashekhar, former president of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee(I).

• S. Arvind Kumar, 52 per cent marks, admitted to Ramaiah Medical College after his name was recommended by Veerappa Moily, then state finance minister. Moily is now the leader of the Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly.

• D. Ramakrishna, 52 per cent marks, admitted to Ramaiah Medical College for 1982–83. He had not been able to get into any Tamil Nadu college because the minimum marks requirement there was 60 per cent. But he was recommended by V.R. Deenadayalu, chairman of Madras Refineries, and was sponsored by Gundu Rao.

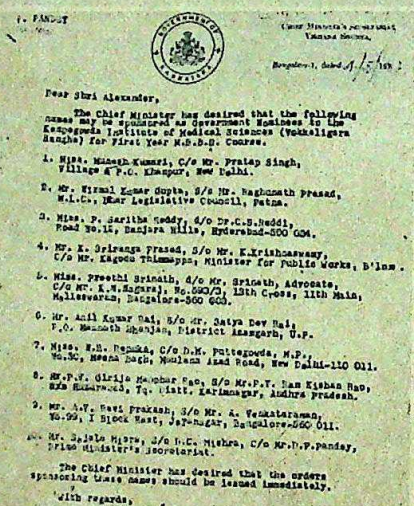
• Nirmal Kumar Gupta, admitted to the Kempegowda Institute as the chief minister's nominee. Gupta is the son of Raghunath Prasad, a Congress(I) member of the Bihar Legislative Council.

• Lalitha Bala Gopalan, 81.6 per cent marks, admitted to Ramaiah Medical College as the chief minister's nominee. She is the daughter of an IAS officer.

• Namitha Chinnappa, 63 per cent marks, admitted to the Kempegowda Institute for 1981–82. She is the daughter of D.A. Chinnappa, president, Karnataka State Adult Education Council, Mysore.

• S.R. Mangala Gauri, admitted to the Kempegowda Institute as a government nominee. She is the daughter of S. Raghu, private secretary to the then minister of state for information and youth services.

Some politicians appear to have made a practice of this sort of thing. Congress(I) MP Prasan Kumar secured admission for no less than four students during 1982–83 in the Ramaiah Medical College, out of the chief minister's discretionary quota of 10 seats. The students: Ravinder Reddy (82 per cent), Vishwajeth B. Bhoopalam (73.3 per cent), Mohammed Asraf (74 per cent) and Ajaz Ahmed Kahan (65.8 per cent).



Chief Minister's secretariat,
Vikasa Soudha,
Bangalore-1, dated 4/5/82

Dear Shri Alexander,

The Chief Minister has desired that the following names may be sponsored as Government Nominees to the Kempegowda Institute of Medical Sciences (Vokkaligara Sangha) for First Year M.B.B.S. Course.

1. Miss. Mitesh Kumari, C/o Mr. Pratap Singh, Village & P.O. Khanpur, New Delhi.
2. Mr. Nirmal Kumar Gupta, S/o Mr. Raghunath Prasad, M.L.C., Near Legislative Council, Patna.
3. Miss. P. Saritha Reddy, S/o Dr.C.B.Reddi, Road No.12, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad-500 034.
4. Mr. K. Srirange Prasad, S/o Mr. K.Krishnaswamy, C/o Mr. Kagodu Thimappa, Minister for Public Works, B'lore.
5. Miss. Preethi Srinath, d/o Mr. Srinath, Advocate, C/o Mr. K.N.Nagaraj, No.660/3, 13th Cross, 11th Main, Malleswaram, Bangalore-560 003.
6. Mr. Anil Kumar Rai, S/o Mr. Satya Dev Rai, P.O. Mahuth Ahanjan, District Azamgarh, U.P.
7. Miss. N.R. Renuka, C/o D.M. Puttegowda, M.P., No.8C, Meena Bagh, Maulana Azad Road, New Delhi-110 011.
8. Mr.P.V. Girija Manohar Rao, S/o Mr.P.V. Ram Kishan Rao, 6/6 Kummarwadi, Tq. Distt. Karimnagar, Andhra Pradesh.
9. Mr. A.V. Ravi Prakash, S/o Mr. A. Venkataramma, No.99, I Block East, Jayanagar, Bangalore-560 011.
10. Mr. Bejoy Misra, S/o D.C. Mishra, C/o Mr.P.P.Pandey, Prime Minister's Secretariat.

The Chief Minister has desired that the orders sponsoring these names should be issued immediately.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(K.P. PANDEY)

Shri J. Alexander,
Secretary to Government,
Health & Family Welfare Department.

...to the President, Kempegowda ...Sciences, Bangalore for admission to the First ...course in the ...Sciences for the ...concerned candidates.

The list of well-connected candidates sponsored by the state Government

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have taken. By opening more colleges galore, I have not done anything More and more people will come to for education."

However, it is clear that Rao's government cleared the colleges in the teeth of tion from the Directorate of Medical tion (DME), the MCI, Bangalore University and the other bodies. The DME, in fact, sent a sharp letter to all those who had applied for permission to start a new medical college in Bangalore; the letter said in part: "The number of candidates passing out of colleges is around 1,500 a year. The requirement in the state is not more than 500 for the present. There is already unemployment problem not only for MBBS but also for postgraduates in this state as well as in the country, especially in south India."

Rejecting the applications, the DME concluded: "A medical college is generally allowed at the ratio of one for 50 lakh of population as per the present norms of this country. On that basis, Karnataka already has nine medical colleges. If the permission for three more colleges is given, the state will have 12 medical colleges as against six according to the norms."

Conditions Ignored: The DME and the Health Department opposed new colleges because the managements did not have a qualified hospital for 100 students, a prerequisite for any new college; because they did not have enough finance for constructing the hospital and the college building; and also because the Central Government had suggested a ban on new colleges until the existing ones had brought their facilities up to the MCI's standards.

But the state Government ignored these repeated comments. In three government orders dated September 11, Novermber 15 and December 20, 1980, the Gokula Education Trust, the Vokkaliga Sangha and the Ananda Educational Trust were permitted—for one year, to start with—to admit students. One of the 12 conditions was that the managements would have to develop medical college and hospital facilities in the next two years; also, they would be bound by government instructions on admissions, including the capitation fee.

As none of the managements had hospitals of their own, they were permitted to use three city hospitals. They were also allotted over 50 acres of land, over 2,000 tonnes of cement and 1,000 tonnes of steel at controlled rates—the buildings are supposed to be ready in another two years. Finally, the letters of permission included the condition that 10 per cent of the seats would be reserved for government-sponsored candidates.

AS THE colleges were given permission to admit students for only a year, the state Government was to review their functioning before extending the permission for another two years. No such inspection was carried out—but, inexplicably, the colleges were allowed to increase their student intake: Ramaiah from 100 to 125, Ambedkar and Kempegowda from 100 to 130. This despite the fact that the colleges were operating from small buildings.

The Karnataka Government justified its decision to increase the quotas on the ground that the state Health Department was expanding its facilities. Said one government order dated October 20, 1982: "Taking into consideration the representations received from the chairman... and considering the facilities available and being developed... the Government are pleased to accord sanction for the revised fixation of intake." The order added that the revised intake "is subject to compliance with the guidelines and stipulations which have been laid down from time to time by the Medical Council".

As it turned out, the MCI was never taken into confidence by the state Government. In fact, it turned down the state Government's request for teams to inspect the newly-opened colleges so that they could be permanently recognised by Bangalore University. The MCI's disapproval was evident at its general meeting held in New Delhi on March 26, 1983. Complained Dr B.N. Sinha, MCI president: "Another point where the council have been quite helpless is the opening of new medical colleges and that too mostly on donation basis. The opening of three medical colleges in Bangalore city which already had two medical colleges, calls for a great concern for everyone. I myself feel puzzled as to how the clinical training of the vast number of students admitted to these medical colleges will be arranged."

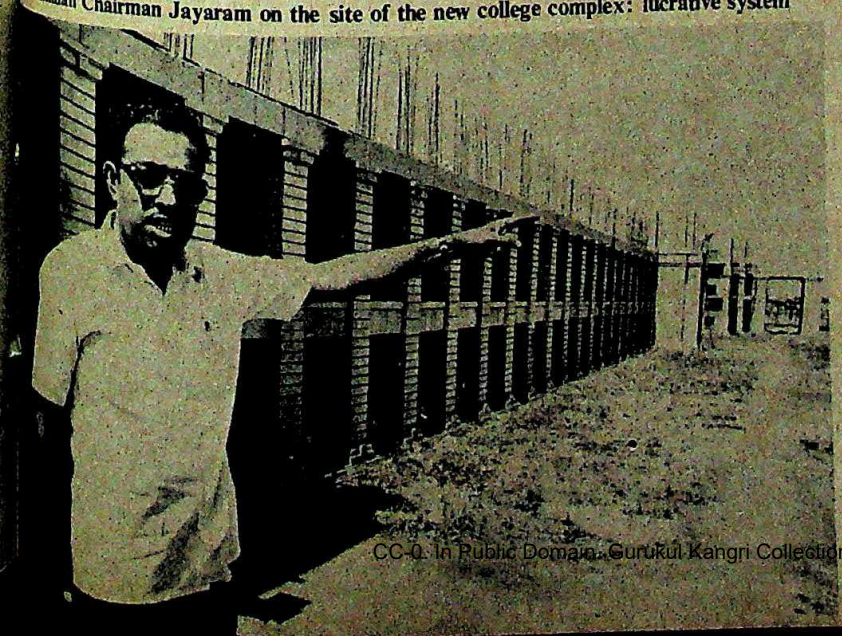
Government Hesitation: For the moment, however, the colleges are here to stay, as is the lucrative capitation fee system. Intense lobbying by college managements and their political godfathers is reportedly behind the state Government's seeming reluctance to decide one way or the other; neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, meanwhile, has taken a firm step by banning the system through an ordinance. Says Hegde: "We are still looking into the financial and legal implications of the question. We need over Rs 150 crore for completely taking over the medical education in the state."

The Central Government, for its part, has indulged in talk—and little more. In June 1981, addressing a meeting of state education ministers, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had spoken out against the capitation fee. Later, Health Minister B. Shankaranand assured Parliament half a dozen times that Central legislation to end the menace would be brought up soon. Meanwhile, Education Minister Sheila Kaul, participating in a Parliament debate on July 22, 1982, admitted that teaching facilities in capitation fee colleges were inadequate. And last fortnight, Shankaranand blamed the MCI for sub-standard medical education. Despite all these statements, nothing has been done.

That is not surprising. It is perhaps not a coincidence that all the private medical colleges were started when Shankaranand was health minister. Also, the ministry has never pulled up any of the colleges for charging capitation fees—a practice frowned upon by Mrs Gandhi. Last week, there were reports that the Central Government was considering proposals to amend the Medical Council of India Act which will make it obligatory on colleges and state governments to obtain prior approval of the Council before increasing medical college seats. But till then medical colleges will continue to rake in the money.

—PRABHU CHAWLA in Bangalore

Ramaiah Chairman Jayaram on the site of the new college complex: lucrative system



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Memories Of Another May

A DARK and forbidding cloak of sullenness enfolds Paris this spring at a time when the city looks its most fetching. Alongside rowdy tourists on the *Bateau Mouche* plying the Seine and joggers rigged out with Walkmans on the Bois de Boulogne, the water cannons, tear-gas grenades and truncheons are also interjecting a dour, mean-spirited look to the vernal season. When 3,000 student demonstrators battled helmeted and goggled policemen outside the National Assembly last fortnight and several thousand agitating students marched in Paris, Montpellier, Marseilles, Lyons, Angers and Dijon, it instantly fuelled widespread speculation amongst French commentators that perhaps this was "May 1968 in reverse". The unremitting waves of student strikes throughout April and this fortnight have been backed up by farmers' protests, labour disputes and bomb blasts, all of which caused the French Government a profound sense of disquiet. More than anything else, it is the timing of these strikes that is making the Socialists and their alliance partners, the French Communist Party, uneasy.

It would be supreme irony if Paris and the rest of the country rose in revolt against the left wing Government. In 1968, student strikes and a nation-wide work stoppage nearly brought down the seemingly invincible government of President Charles de Gaulle. Francois Mitterrand, who during the height of that tumultuous spring solemnly rose to proclaim his "willingness" to assume power from the besieged de Gaulle, would now have all the more reason to broodingly contemplate how the "Ghost of May '68" has now come back to haunt him with such daunting precision: this month being the 15th anniversary of *Les Evénements* and the second anniversary of the Socialist-Communist alliance in power.

So far, the protests –although widespread— are nowhere near the scale of the 1968 spring when 10 million people went on strike, jolting what was then a stiflingly paternalistic Gaullist society. This time, the strikes have been led by the medical students, who have been joined by the faculties of law, economics, pharmacy and architecture. They are protesting against increased government control over their education and fear restrictions on their academic freedom by switching the emphasis of courses to professional training. Instead of Alain Peyrefitte, the minister for education forced to resign in '68 fielding the hostile flak this spring, it is Alain Savary who says he is determined to make higher education more responsive to the job market. Meanwhile French farmers, a xenophobic lot, with typical rebelliousness have literally taken to the streets, protesting foreign imports, the European Community's farm policies and low prices for their produce, and they are burning Belgian ham and Danish meat on the *autoroutes* with their customary elan. And all this against the backdrop of bomb blasts throughout the country purported to be the handiwork of the deadly Corsican separatist movement. Revelling in the Left's increasing discomfiture are Chiracquian Mayors and Giscardian deputies who have been displaying unholy *Schadenfreude*.

The unremitting waves of student strikes throughout April and this fortnight have been backed up by farmers' protests, labour disputes and bomb blasts, all of which caused the French Government a profound sense of disquiet.

Symbolic Stone: The medical students, acting as a spearhead to the agitations, have compelled attention by their inventive flair. They briefly "occupied" the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de Triomphe, staged sit-ins before Napoleon's tomb at the Esplanade des Invalides, held up trains in the Metro, blocked roads with burning tires, to highway toll booths, momentarily "occupied" ministries and released laboratory rats in government offices to the ho 'Socialist' secretaries and *dactylos*. Missing in their strikes so the principal weapon of the students in 1968—*Le Pave* –the sian paving stone which in daring hands was a match for the grenade. Small enough to fit the hand, heavy enough to hurt moured riot policeman, it provided munition for the fighter brick for his barricade. It was also the symbolic stone thrown the edifice of the established order. Since May '68, the cobble in the Latin Quarter have been covered with asphalt, a gestu devoid of symbolic eloquence.

Alain Savary, the education minister, insists that the cont sial university reform programme will go before the legislatu month despite the nation-wide protests in academe, provoking opposition leaders to wonder if the Government had lost c over its faculties. Socialist-oriented dailies are confident that th rent strikes will peter out and illusions of another '68 occurri spring are "puerile hopes of feeble-m rightists and fascist thugs". Although confidence may be justified, the cou fascination with May 1968 is ineluctab decade and a half later, it evokes emo controversy and debate. For scores of elytes, that dramatic spring revolution every aspect of French society. For th hastened the sexual revolution, the wo movement, new trends in journalism, life-styles, the ecology movement. To i tics, it was simply four weeks of unrel hooliganism perpetrated by Marxist chists and subversive quislings who d vedly suffered a stunning rout for dari defy the Gaullist state.

Outstanding Personalities: In what seen overall as a movement that purpos strived to subvert "leaders", May '68 up three outstanding personalities: Daniel Cohn-Bendit, German-born Jewish student belonging to Nanterre's 22nd M Movement and who today lives in Frankfurt; Jacques Sauvag vice-president of the student union who is no more active Alain Geismar, secretary of the lecturers' union and today vic sident of Paris' University VII at Jussieu. Professor Geismar INDIA TODAY: "It will keep coming back despite the best attem shrug it off. Our history texts tend to dismiss the biggest stri France's history in mere footnotes. It depends on how objec you view May '68—it was a time when French society sto looked at itself and asked, 'where are we going?'."

Says Michel Denizot, now an executive with a leading elec nics firm, then on the streets with the students: "It was a m revolt against the existing industrial state." Participants of M exhibited a striking revulsion against anything coming from a against centralism, against authority, against hierarchical o against technocratic mumbo-jumbo. At Parisian universities problem of centralisation and bureaucratisation in the universit compounded by intolerable overcrowding and under-admi tion. When attempts were made to focus attention on students' blems, Gaullist officialdom reacted flippantly. Francois Mi then minister for youth affairs, when he came to Nanterre to in rate the campus swimming pool, was confronted by Cohn-Bendi

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...white paper on youth: 600 pages of inanities. What are you ...about the sexual problems of the young?" The minister re... "If you have sexual problems, go take a plunge into the pool."

...a curious coincidence the first student demonstrations in ...occurred at a time when the 150th anniversary of the birth of Marx was being celebrated. The French crisis, in a sense, has ...interpreted by certain scholars as a vindication of Marxism, ...not any kind of Marxism; certainly not a vindication of the ...bromide or the Soviet Holy Book. The political attitude of ...students was not determined by a scholarly study of Proudhon, ...and Kropotkin. Their anarchism reflected something diffe... ...combined hatred of Gaullist capitalism, disappointment with ...Soviet experiment and contempt for communist bureaucracy, ...to a mistrust of any structured organisation. Professor Gei... ...points out: "The Left did not have the faintest idea of the aspi... ...which inspired May '68. When the communists compromised ...negotiated, they proved that it was the enemy of a movement ...was autonomous from the classical political forces." When poli... ...discussions among the students at the Sorbonne revolved ...Mao and Fanon, Debray and Castro, Ho Chi Minh and Gue... ...it provoked Raymond Aron, that elegant defender of the ...establishment, then writing in *Le Figaro* to ask his invisible ...ment: "Do you expect a bourgeois state to finance a Cuban uni...sity?"

Students demonstrating in Paris: *deja vu*

THE EXPLOSION lasted ...till the end of May. After ...a month-long period of ...and work stoppages, the ...unist trade union, CGT, ...negotiations. De Gaulle ...ed from Baden-Baden in a ...and unyielding mood, ...ved the assembly and de... ...elections. A frightened ...rate, terrified of a "com... ...take-over", rallied to de ...'s appeal and returned ...to power. By the end of ...1968, Gaullist officialdom ...back in form seeming as ...nothing much had ...transpired. It had recovered its habitual Panglossian self-...rance.

Professor Geismar points out there are no heirs or direct in... ...active today of the May '68 generation. If at all there is an in..., it is best exemplified by the left wing, independent daily, ...ation. Born 10 years ago, it grew out of the *L'Agence de Presse ...ation* (APL) an alternative press agency started by Jeal Paul Sar... ...Jean Claude Vernier and Maurice Clavel. A year later an idea of a ...reflecting all the ideas of May '68 was born. In the last decade, ...paper turned from a "silly Maoist rag" to one of the most respec... ...and quotable dailies in France. In this period, the paper gradually ...its radical experiments like job rotation among the staff, equal ...from the editor to the cleaning woman, no advertisements in ...to be free from financial pressures; the paper also underwent ...voluntary stoppages to indulge in revamping and self-introspec... ...It emerged as a tightly edited and well-informed newspaper.

The paper has concentrated on investigative reporting—not a ...point of French journalism. Some of the biggest stories in ...years have been broken by *Libe*. Among them: it published a ...cument document showing the Gaullist government had cont... ...plans during the riots of May '68 to place leftists in the Mar... ...football stadium; it published a list of some 40 CIA members ...ing in Paris listing their addresses and telephone numbers; last month it first broke the story of the intended expulsion of 47 Soviet personnel from France for alleged espionage. The paper now sells a modest but healthy 100,000 copies daily and continues to report in a splendidly irreverent style compared to the stern, *Academie Francaise* prose of the mass-selling *Le Monde*. It has had none of the initial identity problems that confronted left-leaning dailies like *Le Monde* and *Le Matin* when the Socialists came to power. *Liberation* continues to flay Socialists, Communists and Gaullists alike and this uninhibited criticism has helped its credibility, unlike opposition papers like the conservative *Le Figaro* and *Le Quotidien de Paris* which rake muck with paranoid intensity. Serge July, a 'product of '68' and *Libération*'s director told INDIA TODAY: "The Left coming to power has been a marvellous opportunity for us to pursue objective journalism. What *Le Figaro* does is propaganda but we have no political vested interest. We have seen as our job to report on the contradictions, not to resolve them." Adds a journalist from *Le Matin*: "If today, France's newspapers freely discuss homosexuals, drugs, minorities, immigrants, punk rock, prison conditions, it is thanks to *Libération*'s path-breaking reportage."

Disillusionment: Serge July, a perceptive analyst of Socialist France, says there may be a sense of disillusion today among those people who had ecstatically thronged the Place de la Bastille when the Socialists were elected to power two years ago (INDIA TODAY, June 1–15, 1981): "But those people at the Place de la Bastille did not have too many grand illusions about the Mitterrand Government in the first place. Despite the current disillusionment, I do not think it is enough to provoke another '68. That event itself was paradoxical for it was both modern and archaic at the same time that had elements of both the 19th and the 20th century. If something like that were to happen today, it would be in an entirely different form."

For the moment Mitterrand has cause to be uneasy but not enough to be despondent. All the principal actors of '68 are no more or are inactive—de Gaulle, Pompidou, Alain Peyrefitte, Communist Party leader Waldeck-Rochet, Labour leader Georges Seguy, police chief Maurice Grimmaud, Professor Alain Geismar, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Jacques Sauvageot. From among the Socialists, Pierre Mendes-France is dead but Mitterrand now rules France with his quaint and often incomprehensible brand of socialism. This fortnight he has been busy visiting 'exotic' places like Kathmandu and Beijing. It is being hoped that should matters escalate and assume menacing proportions, the French President will show better judgment by staying home to resolve the crisis.

In '68, when the crisis was turning dangerous, de Gaulle inexplicably decided to embark on a state visit to Rumania. On his return he found the nation writhing in revolt and dishevelment. Emerging from an emergency cabinet session, de Gaulle baffled reporters and startled prudish Gaullist supporters by using a guardroom term: *La Reforme Oui, le Chienlit Non" ('Chienlit'* literally meaning "messing in bed"). In a flash, students at the Beaux Arts printed a caricature of the general and plastered the slogan all over Paris, "*Le Chienlit, C'est Lui*" ('The one making the mess is he'), while the irrepressible *Canard Enchaine* commented on the general's performance: "The General Chi-En-Li... or Chaos-Tse-Tung". So far the *Canard*'s only epithet for Mitterrand has been to call him, somewhat endearingly, "*Ton Ton*" (uncle).

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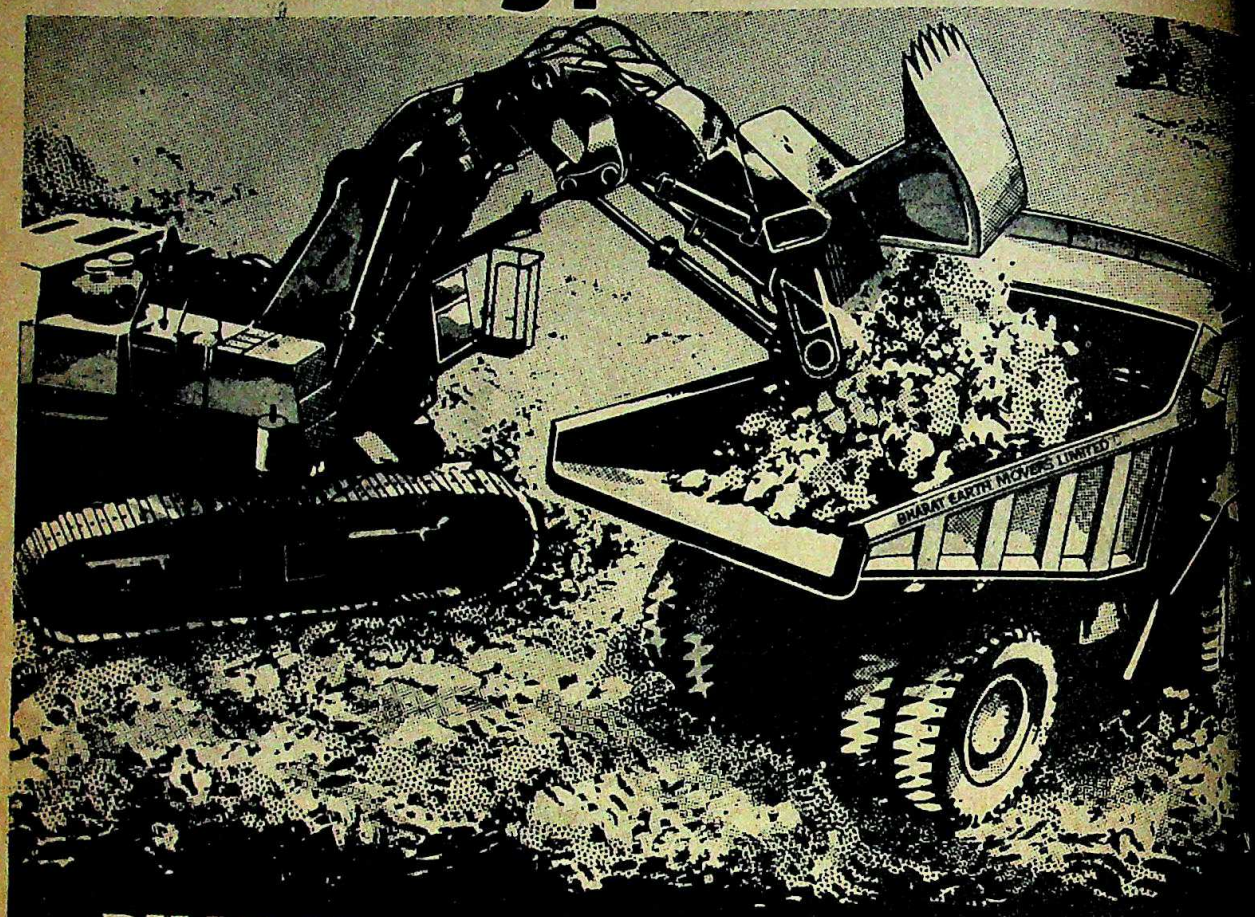
A moving performance.



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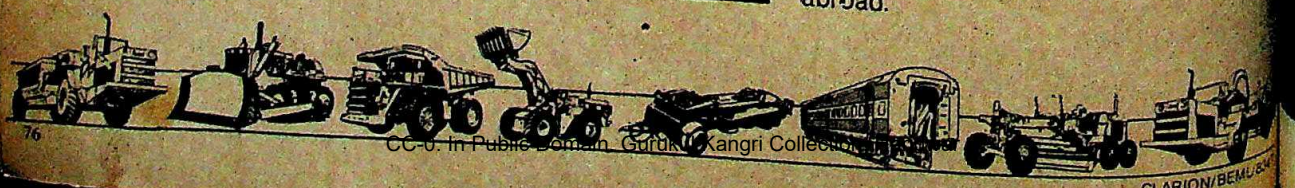

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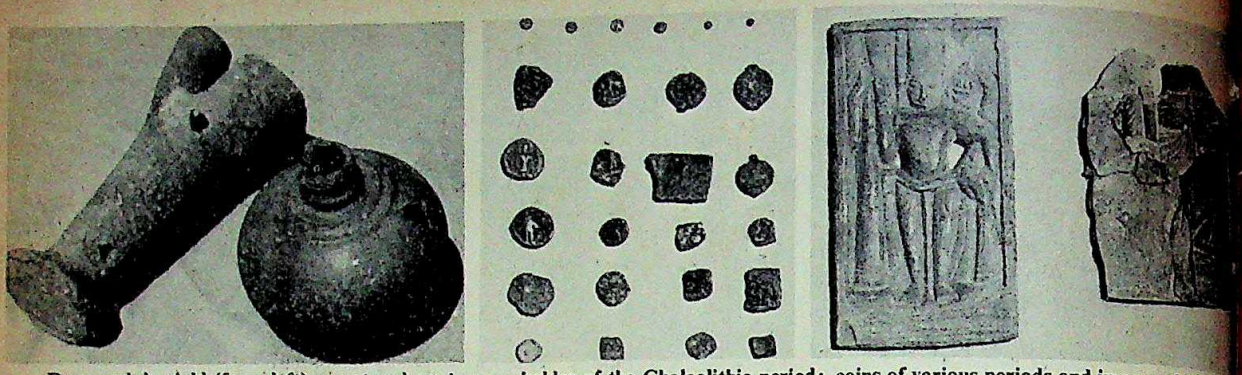


Dangwada's yield (from left): a pot and an incense holder of the Chalcolithic period; coins of various periods and images of Vishnu

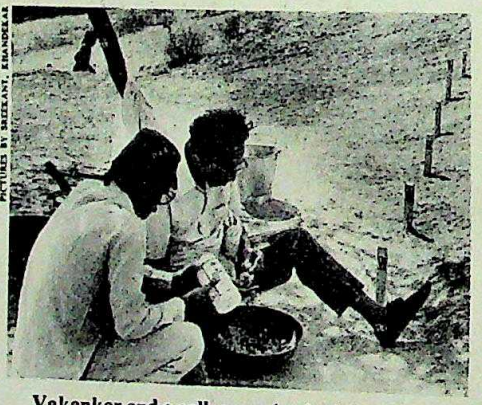
DANGWADA

Historical Harvest

THREE years ago excited archaeologists made one of their biggest hauls in Dangwada, 30 km west of Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh. Recently, at the very same spot, the earth has again yielded coins, pottery and fresh evidence of houses that push civilisation as far back as 3500 B.C., many years further than earlier excavations had done. The Excavation Department of Vikram University and the Madhya Pradesh Directorate of Archaeology are jointly working on the site. The operation is headed by Dr V.S. Vakankar, a well-known archaeologist.

Age does not seem to have deterred the 63-year-old Vakankar, who first visited the hillock 17 years ago. Says he: "I came here because a friend told me that there were pottery pieces scattered all over the place." The hillock which is on the bank of the river Chambal, is a "habitational deposit". The term means that it is a site on which settlements have succeeded one another over the centuries. A mud house can survive up to 200 years. When it collapses, the ground level rises to make way for another habitation. With time, the level of the ground keeps rising and when excavators begin digging, layer upon layer of civilisations are unearthed, the oldest being hidden at the deepest level. The Dangwada hillock rises about 60 ft above the surrounding plains. Says Vakankar: "The place is quite remarkable in the amount of evidence it has to yield. "The campsite is surrounded by piles of broken pottery lying in neatly classified mounds.

Fresh Evidence: An extremely large number of coins have also been unearthed here—about 2,000 in number and made primarily of copper. The oldest are believed to be around 2,600 years old before which period a barter system existed. The interest in the site is increased by the archaeologists' claim that they have evidence of houses from the Chalcolithic period, that is, from the copper and stone ages. This would make them well over 3,000 years old. Nothing remains of the houses, of course, except indications of where the walls and floor once were. Between 2200 B.C. and 2000 B.C.—in Malwa, during the Kayatha culture—the floors were prepared with considerable labour. They were made of yellow silt, sand, river gravel, limestone and pottery pieces on which were



PICTURES BY SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

Vakankar and a colleague: intriguing theories

further layers of sand and yellow silt. Finally dung was applied.

A few centuries later, by the time of the Ahar culture (2000 B.C. to 1700 B.C.), sloping roofs with rice husk had come into vogue. These changed later to flat mud roofs and it is interesting that since then very little has changed. The only difference is that in rural Malwa today, the houses' dimensions are larger and iron is used.

Vakankar also claims the discovery of a "temple complex" which he dates back 3,500 years, a temple that he says is much older than the earliest one known before this—of the second century B.C. In the *yagna shala* (sacrificial house) were found burnt sticky a fire altar, figurines of three deities and terracotta lamps. In a family temple wh was part of a house, the team discover three mother goddesses (in a conical sha and the figure of a bull, ringed by 14 bo for offerings. An apsidal temple also be ged to this period although only a platfo remains of it. All this was in addition to *Yagna shala* of the second century B.C. wh was found in the first part of the excava and had yielded pots with carbonised gr of rice, barley, *moong* and *urad*.

Important Discoveries: The finds in p tery and tools are significant as well. O Kayatha culture are copper axes and sto heads. Pottery was made on the turn wheel and some of the shapes bear resc blance to those of Harappan culture t there are designs that Vakankar says even pre-Harappan. Vakankar m makes the important claim that his te has found a 3,500-year-old mould th was used for making copper heads axes. Says he: "This is the first time that such an ancient mould has be found." Of the Ahar period, stone plin and terracotta bulls have been disco red. After this culture appear be made of stone and soapstone.

Of the period between 1000 B.C. 600 B.C., however, nothing has be found, as if for 400 years civilisation vanished. This is also true of other sites Malwa. In what is perhaps his most con versial statement, Vakankar attempts to plain the gap in time. He says that a white streak in the excavations explains rything. "There was a devastating flood," claims, "which destroyed everything. T are also references to such a catastroph our epics and in Buddhist literature, re ring to just this period. This streak in earth has been made by sand following a in the level of water." But whether this wi accepted as a popular theory will be kn only after leading archaeologists have debated Vakankar's contention.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in Dan

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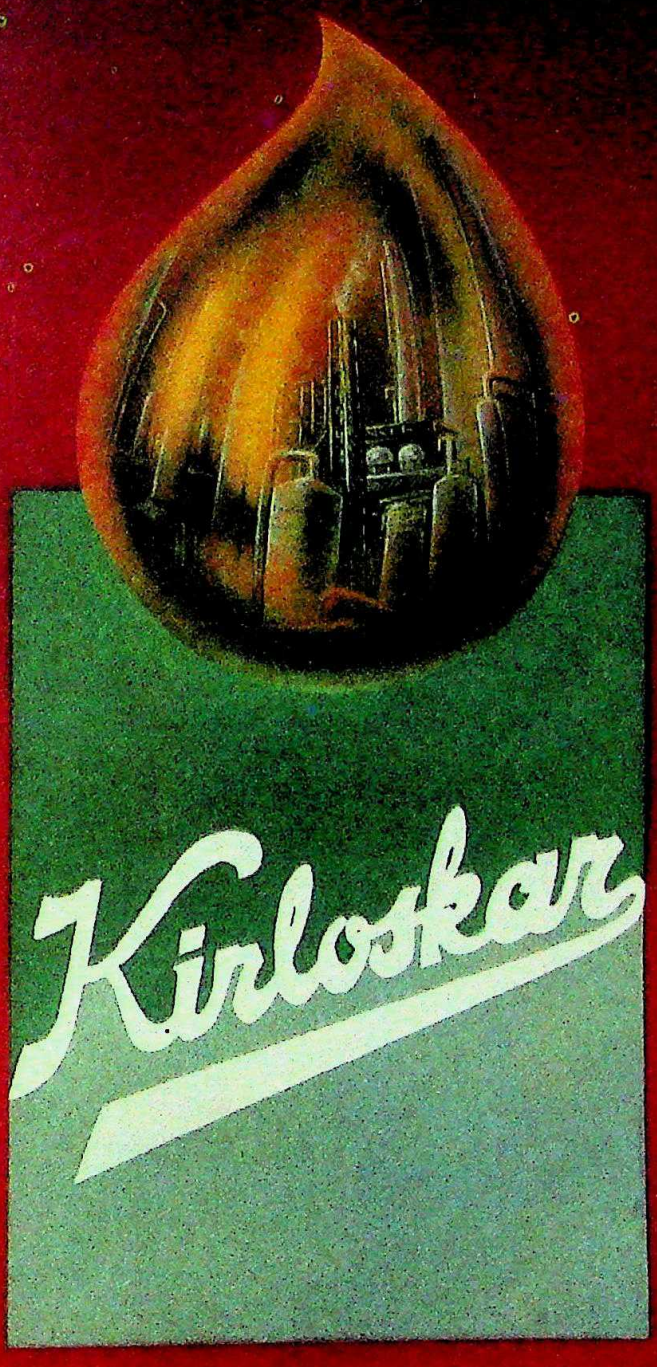

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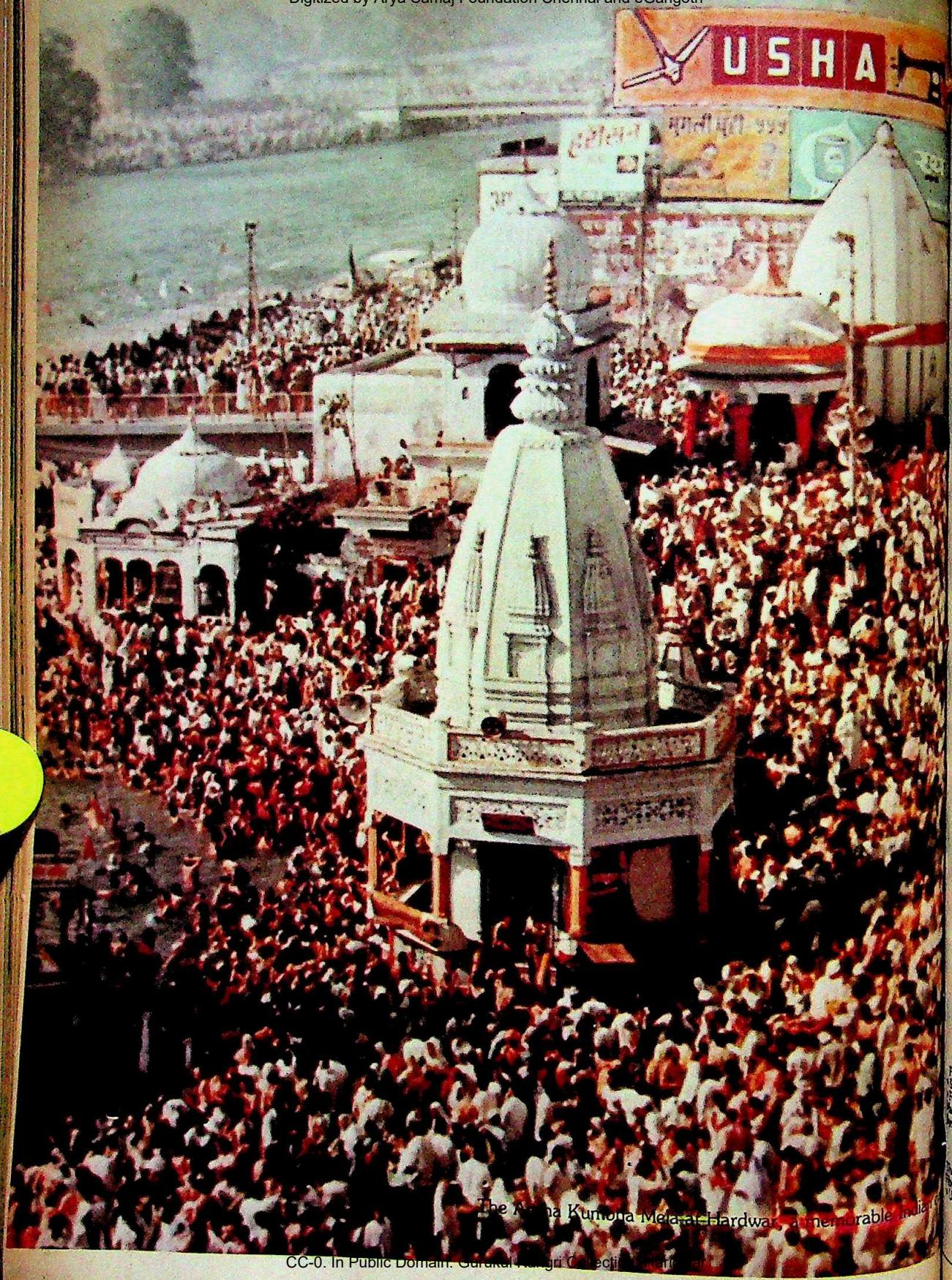

The Maha Kumbha Mela at Hardwar, a memorable India

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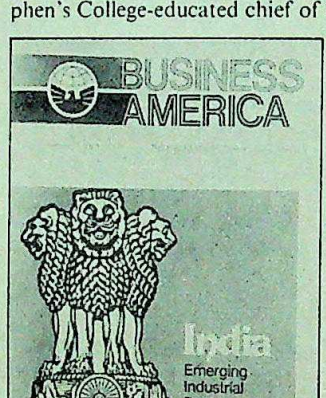
The Marketing Of India

"I'M CONVINCED India is the world's commercial sleeping giant," says Alabama businessman Terry Habshey who is forging ahead with plans to mass-produce a revolutionary bullock-cart in India. "It's an exciting market. All the businessmen I talk to in Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong are afraid that this giant will wake up and become a tough competitor."

Joe Sharlitt, president of Washington-based India International Inc, a company that specialises in finding partners for Indo-US business collaborations, echoes Sharlitt's sentiments. "Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan are becoming less and less attractive for labour-intensive industries such as the production of software components for computers," he says. "Manufacturing companies should be turning to India and I'm optimistic that they will. The trouble is, most of them don't understand the Indian market or Government policies."

But there is little doubt that American businessmen, particularly medium-sized entrepreneurs, are becoming cautiously bullish about the Indian market. A crucial indicator of this trend was the recent issue of the US Commerce Department publication, *Business America*.



Ambassador Barnes (left) and the *Business America* cover: growing awareness

Renewed Interest: The widely read magazine of international trade featured India on its cover under the heading: "India –Emerging Industrial Power". The 11-page article titled "India Provides New Opportunities" discussed topics such as Indian Government policies and the economy, liberalisation of trade policies, ways of launching new collaborations, profit repatriations and promising sectors for US business.

"As we approach the bottom line on any discussion on US trade and investment in India, we must not overlook the biggest incentive –the Indian businessman himself," noted the magazine. "He is able, savvy, technically sound and, above all, knows how to manoeuvre through the bureaucratic thicket in India. In short, he knows how to put it all together and make it work. Thanks to several Indian business schools and several institutes of technology, American companies can and do find Indian companies that are well managed and are able to receive the technology they provide."

"Executives visiting India," US Ambassador Harry Barnes told the magazine, "are reporting back to corporate headquarters that they are finding goodwill and a genuine desire to expand Indo-US business cooperation. As a result, the Fortune 500 as well as small companies with little or no international experience are examining the situation and coming in."

Increasing Trade: Gradually but surely, the stereotyped perception about India—the ultra-protectionist bureaucratic behemoth holding an empty begging bowl before the world—is changing. Trade statistics reflect this reality. Two-way trade between India and America has now crossed the $3 billion mark –the balance being almost equal –and is estimated to grow at a rate of between 16 and 20 per cent each year.

The US has now become India's largest business partner. Of 6,621 joint ventures with foreign countries approved between 19 and 1981 more than 1,306 are with the US. According to official tistics, the US had the largest number of collaborations approved India, 210, compared with the next highest collaborator, the UK 189, out of a total 915 collaborations approved for all countries 1981. In 1980, India approved 82 new collaborations with the The figure jumped to 105 in 1983 bringing the total US investment India to more than $500 million.

The growing interest in India and the impetus for increa trade was sparked by Mrs Gandhi's visit to America, during wh she openly appealed to businessmen to investigate the Indian mar and repeatedly assured them that her Government would not na nalise their ventures. The Indian Embassy was then given its ord Go out there and promote trade. Sell.

Sales Pitch: The Washington Embassy's pointman and hi powered salesman is debonair diplomat Naresh Dayal, the St S phen's College-educated chief of India's hitherto somnolent sup mission. In what one diplo jokingly referred to as "Da successful one-man-dog-a pony road show", Dayal travelled almost non-stop s Mrs Gandhi's visit to just ab every corner of America to dress seminars attended by p minent businessmen to exp the attractiveness of the Ind market.

"It's not as if we're go out there and exposing or p ling backsides," says Da "We're not saying that I has a *carte blanche* open-d policy. We are careful to p out the selected areas in w American businesses welcome. And we emph that all collaborations—buying from India, selling from India, manufacturing in India—must be mutually beneficial." And Da admits that he has received invaluable help from officials of Commerce and State Departments who have participated in seminars and provided glowing sales pitches for India.

"We are appealing more and more to medium-sized entre neurs," says Dayal. "While multinationals with experience in I don't need a crash course on the Indian economy and policies, there is a tremendous information gap about India among mid-s companies. Part of our job at these seminars has been to dispel vailing myths and illusions."

Adds Joe Sharlitt: "Some of the impressions Ameri businessmen have about India are patently false, while others w were true in the past have changed materially since the Governm new liberalised trade policies. There has been a lack of effec public relations. And there should be a more widespread, system effort to show and promote the benefits of the new policies. Pe don't seem to understand that the Government of India is ser But things are changing. I've been in the business of promo private collaborations between the two countries for only months and I've already got clients. I'm optimistic." Encoura words, to be sure.

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WHY INDIA, American businessmen ask. The reasons offered by Dayal's roadster salesman are simple and succinct: India is stable, with a consuming middle class of about a hundred million people. India is strategically located near world markets. India has the third-largest pool of trained, skilled—and inexpensive—manpower available in the world.

Then there are the "misperceptions". Dayal says, about the highly controlled economy" and the "prohibition" on repatriation of profits and dividends. He explains to his American audiences: India has never reneged on repatriation of profits and dividends so long as a joint venture fulfils the terms of its agreement. Indian stocks are so widely issued that investors can control a firm with 26 per cent equity. Indo-American firms paid dividends as high as 190 per cent even during the economic recession. The Indian Government offers tax holidays, depreciation allowances as well as innumerable incentives to business in backward areas in India.

Favourable Climate: And there are also plausible answers to the usual questions about Indian red tape: a strong effort is under way to streamline procedures. For example, joint ventures producing goods exclusively for export purposes will receive a "single window clearance"—their licences will be reviewed, not by layers of committees as in the past, but by a single committee obligated to clear the venture within no more than 60 days. Other industrial projects will receive clearances or disapprovals within a mandated 90-day period.

Another nagging question: what about legal redress for disputes in India? The best response came not from Dayal but from Bruce Buckland, an executive of the Monsanto Corporation who attended one of the seminars. Buckland related the story of how the Madras High Court ruled in Monsanto's favour in a case involving an Indian company that had been accused by the fertilizer manufacturing multinational of violating a patent.

One key selling point is the attractiveness of using India as a launch pad for the export of items manufactured in India to third countries. Perhaps the most forceful advocate of this incentive is Robert Long, a former Cummins Engines executive who is now vice-president of the Nebraska Engineering Company. Long has spoken favourably about India at the road show seminars.

Long, who was with Cummins when the company started collaboration with the Kirloskars to produce pumps and engines in Pune, told INDIA TODAY: "The prospect of sales to third countries was good then and it will be better now with the Indian Government's new policies. Financing from Indian banks was adequate and we were able to sell from Pune to Brazil and various Islamic countries."

Higher Returns: Long added: "The engines produced by Kirloskars are equal or better in quality than their American counterparts. The return on investment and overall high probability of a mutually profitable relationship, I would recommend India over Japan or Brazil. It was simpler and easier to operate in India than it was in many of the European countries, particularly France."

Traditionally, many of the consumer products of Indo-US collaborations—cosmetics for example—have been exported to the Soviet Union. But now India seems poised to start exporting non-traditional goods manufactured through such collaborations to other markets in Africa and the Middle East. The giant Dupont Industries is interested in coming to India. And in recent months, about 40 computer software companies have begun actively exploring joint manufacturing ventures in India. The software would be manufactured exclusively for export purposes.

"That suits us to a 'T'," says Dayal. "The businesses will not only generate employment but also guarantee an influx of foreign exchange." In addition, directly as a result of the road show, eight other companies have expressed an interest in the outright purchase from India of machine tools, guar gum, forged auto parts, electronics, food products such as mango pulp—and even tea.

Impressive Growth: A recent study published by the Indo-US Chamber of Commerce, a blunt-talking, tell-it-like-it-is organisation, gave high marks to the performance of joint Indo-American ventures during the last five years. According to the study, "Appreciable growth in profits, sales revenue, assets, dividends, equity capital and retained earnings was recorded by the 34 companies (in the survey sample)."

Perhaps the most significant change in the Indo-US trade atmosphere was signalled by the visit to New Delhi by the trade delegation sponsored by the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). As the Government agency responsible for encouraging private investments in Third World countries, OPIC offers political risk insurance and finance services to American companies entering those markets. The mission of the 31-member delegation, one of the biggest ever, was pronounced an unqualified success.

The OPIC-sponsored trade delegation with Mrs Gandhi: unqualified success.

New Ventures: Following the visit, 13 companies announced plans to undertake investments in India. Datapower Inc, a California-based company, plans to start a 100,000 sq ft plant to make electronic switching power suppliers; Lazare Kaplan International, a New York-based diamond company is proposing a joint venture to purchase, cut and polish high-quality gems using its exclusive technology; Cytozyme Laboratories, a Utah-based company, plans to manufacture agricultural biological products; Agro Associates, a Connecticut-based firm, has signed a memorandum with Taj Industries to promote poultry farming and feed milling; Mid-American International Trade Company, a Minnesota-based trading firm, has signed six letters of intent with major Indian groups to provide high technology in electronics and other industrial areas; Vita Inc, a Virginia-based non-profit organisation, has signed agreements to help Indo-US joint ventures in micro-computer manufacture, software development and solar refrigeration units; Pro-Tire Inc, an Alabama company plans to make an improved bullock-cart; seven independent oil and gas exploration companies met with leading Indian companies to seek collaboration for exploring and developing India's oil and gas resources; Vishnu Saran, a Colorado businessman, plans to establish a project to process snack foods in a designated industrial zone; Optelcom Inc, a Washington-based company, is exploring the possibility of joint product research on transmitting information with light beams; Milwaukee Gear, a Wisconsin-based company plans to license gear manufacturing technology to Indian companies; Neer Manufacturing is pursuing two joint ventures for zinc die-cast electrical conduit fittings; 301 Corporation, a Colorado-based firm, has conferred with several Indian businessmen to set up micro-processor production plants.

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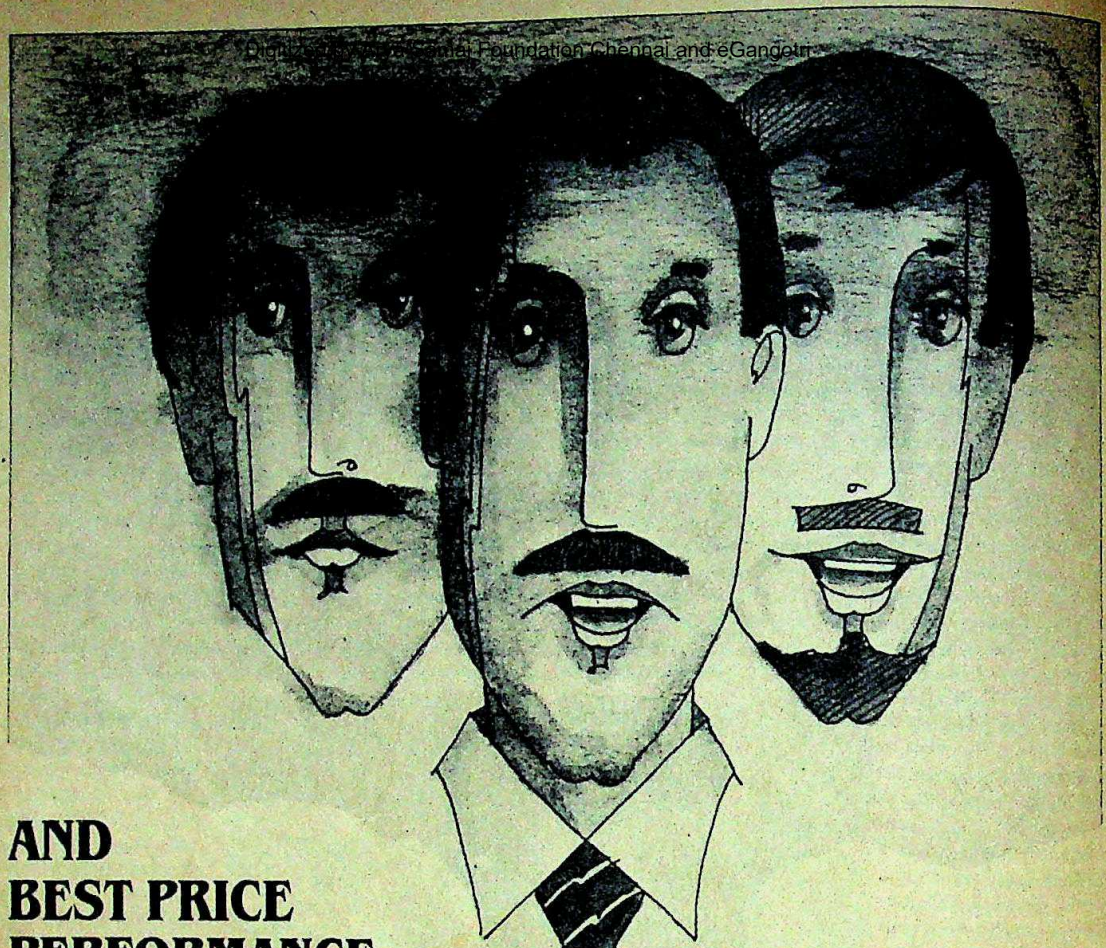

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COMPANY BLUES

THE EFFECTS of the industrial recession last year have begun to be reflected in company annual reports, with a number of major companies reporting lower sales or profits, or both. Mahindra Ugine Steel has attributed its poor results to the liberal import policy, while the credit squeeze has affected companies like Ashok Leyland and Escorts, both of which have reported reduced profits. Similarly, DCM has shown a sharp drop in profits. Other companies to suffer are Kirloskar Oil Engines and Kirloskar Electric, both of which have returned lower profits, while the problems of the paper industry are reflected in the lower profits of Andhra Pradesh Paper. Similarly, the travails of the tyre industry are reflected in the lower sales of both Goodyear and J.K. Industries, though a major contributory factor here was lack of power. Textile companies like Bombay Dyeing have of course been affected by the prolonged strike in Bombay. Most companies have reported a squeeze on margins and sluggish market conditions. Some companies report that their problems have continued into the new year—Kirloskar Oil Engines is one example—but others like Escorts and J.K. Industries have recorded increased production.

...O FOR TEA

BROOKE Bond will shortly be taking a decision on a proposed merger with Karnataka Scooters, a joint venture project that has been going through difficult times. This will be Brooke ...d's first foray into a major engineering field, especially since the ...pany has dropped its proposal to take over the blade manu...turing company Centron Industrial Alliance.

Karnataka Scooters has had many suitors: Escorts was a ...nder at one stage, Mahindra Ugine a second, and Falcon Tyres ...rd. The latest merger proposal is likely to go through because ...ke Bond stands to gain substantial tax write-off benefits by ...rbing Karnataka Scooters's accumulated losses; the Karnataka ...rnment and the Central financial institutions are equally keen ...e Brooke Bond take on the responsibility for a company that ...d otherwise be a drain on public money. A final decision on the ...er is expected this fortnight.

...TON'S LEVERAGE

...PTON India plans to move into food products other than those ... it will get through acquiring some divisions of its sister com...pany Hindustan Lever. While Lever will be giving Lipton its ...aspati, edible oils, dairy products and animal and poultry feeds ...ness, Lipton also intends moving into packaged foods like soup ...ers with the help of Lipton USA—a subsidiary of Unilever which ...o holds 40 per cent of Lipton India's equity and 51 per cent of ...dustan Lever's.

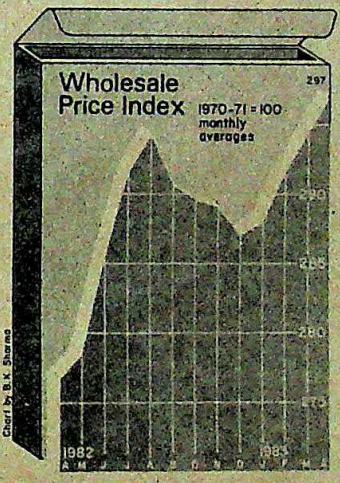
This will mark a major diversification for Lipton, which has so ...been a one-product company concentrating on packaged tea. But ...process of acquiring Hindustan Lever's food products businesses ...xpected to take a couple of years since it requires getting official ...ances and undergoing the legal formalities.

...ING PLACES

AMERICAN luggage makers Samsonite are about to enter the ...Indian market with a splash, in collaboration with VIP Indus...tries, a subsidiary of Blow Plast Ltd. Samsonite Corporation ...e offered up to 40 per cent of VIP's share capital, and a new ...t set up in Gujarat to manufacture a million pieces of hard and ...ggage annually. Up to 40 per cent of production is committed ...xports, partly to the Soviet Union and East Europe, where VIP ...eady made a dent in the market. Total exports by the company ...ated to Rs 3 crore in 1981–82, up from Rs 15 lakh four years ...er.

WHOLESALE WORRIES

PRICES have become a problem once again, with the wholesale price index registering a 9.5 per cent increase over the year to April 30, and the consumer price index showing a 10 per cent increase during the last financial year. With the wholesale price index crossing the 300 point mark at the end of April, wholesale prices have trebled in the last 13 years—an average annual increase of close to 10 per cent.



During the past 12 months food articles caused the most worry—especially cereals, which rose by close to 14 per cent. If this reflects a poor agricultural year, the next few months may very well see further inflation in this area, not least because there is a seasonal upswing this part of the year.

BRAND NEWS

TWO CIGARETTE manufacturers, Godfrey Phillips and Duncan Agro Industries, are negotiating with Rothmans for introducing international brands belonging to Rothmans. Negotiations have been going on for some months, and a Rothmans team was in India once again last fortnight for further discussions with the domestic cigarette companies. A number of well-known international brands belonging to Rothmans are already registered with the trade marks authorities, and no fresh permission is required from the Government for introducing these brands in the country.

Rothmans has been seeking an entry into India for some time, especially because the market is dominated by ITC, an associate of Rothmans's world-wide competitor British American Tobacco (BAT). The domestic cigarette companies in turn are holding out to Rothmans the carrot of exports to countries where Rothmans does not currently have direct access. Two examples are Afghanistan and Iran.

Some other international manufacturers of consumer goods have shown a similar interest in getting Indian companies to use their brand names, one example being whisky. But not much progress is understood to have been made on this front.

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FAMILY ENTERPRISES

The Management Myth

THE LATEST issue of *Unilever Magazine* of London carries an old picture of eight gentlemen who sat for a photograph at Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York 60 years ago. They were Harvey S. Firestone of the Firestone Tyre Co, Henry Ford of the Ford Motor Co, Walter Chrysler of the Chrysler Corporation, George Eastman of Eastman-Kodak, Sir Thomas Lipton of Lipton Inc, Julius Rosenwald of Sears Roebuck & Company, Thomas Edison, inventor and Charles M. Schwab of the US Steel Corporation.

What is so special about these men? They were pioneers in their own fields and started their businesses single-handed, initially from old warehouses and horse stables. Starting as one-man outfits, they became family enterprises and, in many cases, the original families still have large stakes in what are now giant multinational empires. The Leverhulme family owns 20 per cent of the Unilever equity through various trusts and foundations; but the last of the family survivors, Lod Leverhulme, has no children and when he dies the Unilever colossus, with a turnover exceeding that of the top 20 Indian business houses put together, will snap its last link with the founder.

The same is true of most other industrial empires in the US and elsewhere. They have ceased to have any connection with the founding families except perhaps for an odd director or two who still adorn their boards. Ford Motor Co, for instance, does not have a Ford on its board and Chrysler Corporation is headed by an old Ford employee. But this did not happen overnight.

Family Concerns: For more than 50 years the industrial scene in the US and Europe was dominated by business families and a large number of medium and small companies are still family businesses. But by and large, families have given way to what are known as professionals, not only because the families themselves had lost interest and wanted to take it easy, but also because of strong government action against trusts and monopolies. The Rockefeller oil empire was broken up by the US Government and the Krupp steel combine by the German Government after the Second World War.

Now, if it takes anything between 50 and 100 years for an American family to snap its links with its business, isn't it too early perhaps to expect Indian families to hand over their business to others and walk away just like that? The family is a much stronger institution in India than in the West—so strong in fact that it dominates not only the economic system but the political system also.

In any case, Indian industry as it is today is no more than 25 or 30 years old. Of the top 20 companies, 11 did not even exist before the war. And of the top 100 companies, probably as many as two-thirds are less than 25 years old. If private business in India happens to be a close, family affair, it is because it is so young. At that stage of development, the business in the US and Britain was almost certainly more of a family affair than it is in India today.

Changing Situation: Indian companies are still very small in comparison with those elsewhere. The number of companies with assets exceeding Rs 100 crore is only 40 and those with sales exceeding Rs 100 crore is no more than twice that number. In these days of inflation, Rs 100 crore is a small amount and can still be managed by an enterprising family if its members are made of the right stuff.

From a study of 18 major companies, ranging from Tata Steel to Escorts, there seems to be no relation whatsoever between the style of a company's management and its growth or general well-being.

It is when assets exceed, say, Rs 500 crore—there are at the moment only two companies at that level. Tata Steel and Tata Engineering (TELCO)—that a great deal of decentralisation in decision-making is called for, as then the business becomes too complex to be looked after over a meal at the family table. The real crunch will therefore come in about 10 years' time, say, by 1995 or so, when maybe about two dozen companies will have jumped over the Rs 500-crore fence. I am afraid Swraj Paul is spoiling for a fight with his 'feudal families' too soon.

Incidentally, when is an enterprise a family business? When there are two, three, four, family members on the board, or just one? And is there a rational basis for thinking that a professionally managed company is more efficient than a family-run business; and, if so, what does one make of a recent study by an Ahmedabad institute which concluded that family-run companies have done better in India than those run by professionals?

Unfortunately, while we know who owns Indian industry, we do not know much about who runs it. We know who owns it—about 400 or 500 families along with a million or so shareholders and a few government institutions. And it is in a way natural to assume that since the shareholders are in majority, they should have a much larger say in the running of the business than a few family members who between them probably own no more than 5 per cent to 10 per cent of the stock.

FROM a study of 18 major companies, ranging from Tata Steel (TISCO) to Escorts, there seems to be no relation whatsoever between the style of a company's management and its growth or general well-being. Reliance Textiles—a family-run company if there was one—has four family members on its board and Hindustan Lever which is a subsidiary of a multinational has none. Lever has had a long innings in India in its many forms, but as a public company it is about 25 years old.

Reliance is much younger and was not even heard of 10 years ago. Yet Reliance has shot past Lever to become the country's number four company and is certainly among the most dynamic of Indian companies. It is also technologically as advanced in its chosen field of business—synthetic textiles—as Hindustan Lever is in fats and chemicals.

Management Styles: Take Escorts and Larsen & Toubro, both engineering companies with excellent reputations in their respective lines. Larsen & Toubro is slightly bigger than Escorts and also a little older. But both are expanding at much the same pace and are diversifying furiously into areas that are far removed from their traditional lines of business, which indicates a sharp top management hand or brain at work.

The two are, however, totally different in their respective management styles. Escorts has three family members on the board while Larsen & Toubro has none. Escorts has one non-family employee on the board; Larsen & Toubro has eight. Escorts has five bureaucrats (including

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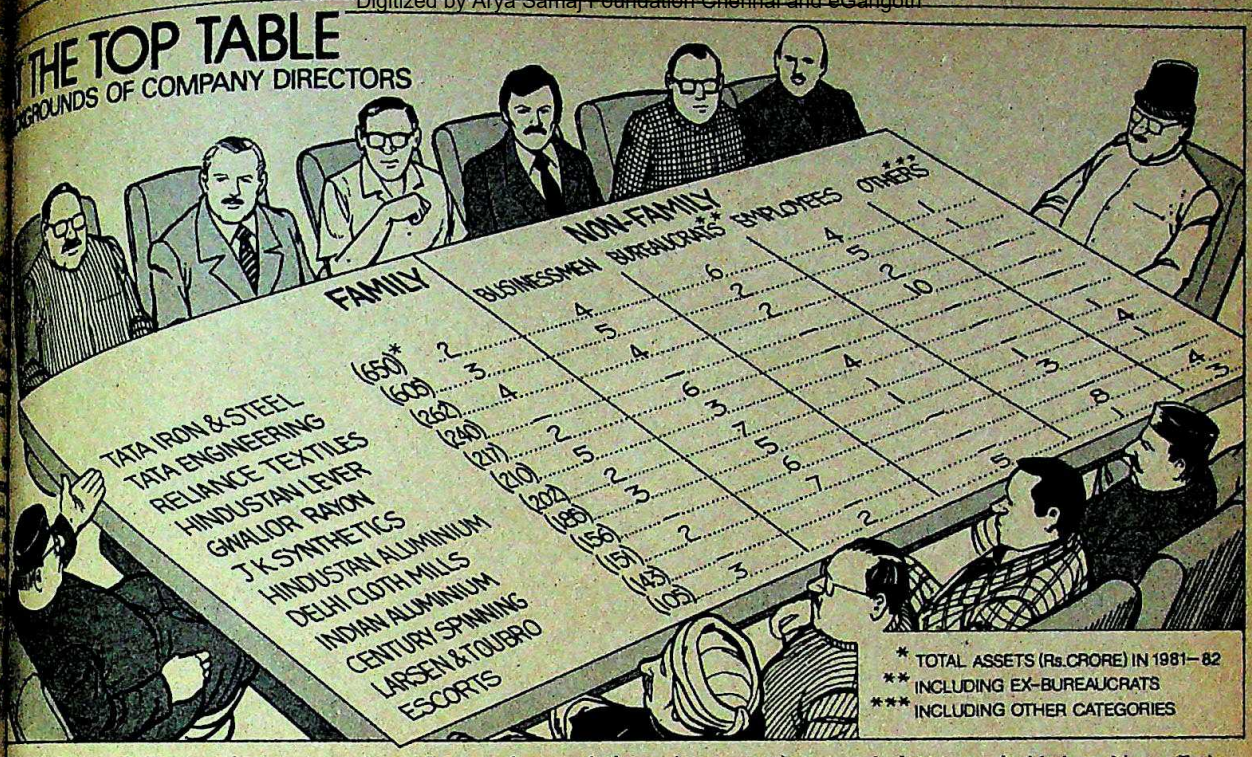

ucrats); Larsen & Toubro has none. oth are successful companies, with s quoted at nearly the same premium oth with massive development pro- es in hand.

ke again another set of comparable ies: Hindustan Aluminium and Aluminium. Both make the same pro- or more or less the same range of pro- and are also roughly of the same size. stan Aluminium is controlled by the and there are two Birla family members board—G.D. Birla himself and his ect. Aditya Birla. Indian Aluminium sidiary of Alcan, the Canadian multi- nal, and is controlled and run by profes- . It has three employees on the board Hindustan Aluminium has none. companies apparently don't fancy yees on their boards).

et Hindustan Aluminium is conside- better company than its competitor and mium on its share is more than twice an Indian Aluminium. In fact, the ma- ent of Indian Aluminium doesn't it has much of a future as a separate y making aluminium and has recom- merger with a Bombay-based com- Mahindra & Mahindra.

Quality: What really matters—more whether a company is family-run or ed by professionals—is the quality of ement, rather than the style. It mat- s whether the board consists of two ers, three cousins and one brother-in- whether these gentlemen have the sharp business sense to anticipate and push their ideas through the thic- ket of controls, regulations, bureaucratic sleight-of-hand and political pressures, along with, of course, the pressing claims of modernization and technology. And of course there must be the urge to innovate, to grab opportunities before someone else does so, and to keep on pushing until you are told: thus far and no farther!

Tatas and Birlas have different styles of management but their quality is of an equally high standard. Tata Steel has two Tatas and four full-time employees on the board while Birla's flag carrier, Gwalior Rayon, has two Birlas on the board and no employee anywhere near it. Both go in for outside directors (Tata Steel four, Gwalior Rayon six,) and the mix of family men and outside directors (employees in the case of Tatas) seems to have worked pretty well.

But while in the Birla group the thrust almost certainly comes from the family members—G.D. Birla receives daily reports on his companies by telex every morning wherever he happens to be—in the case of Tatas the style is more relaxed and less patriarchal and men like Palkhivala, Moolgaokar and Modi play a much more important role than their counterparts in Birlas.

Reorganisation: Hindustan Lever is a case in point. For years the company has been under pressure from New Delhi to dilute its equity to 40 per cent and get out of the FERA (Foreign Exchange Regulation Act) trap and go on making soap and vanaspati and toothpaste, no questions asked. It was an easy option, and with excellent staff and other facilities the company could have taken the easy way out. But it did not.

It has now decided to hive off those portions of the business that are acting as a drag on growth and pass them on to another Unilever company, Lipton, which is no more a FERA company and currently handles just one product—tea. Lipton will now diversify into fats, animal feeds and dairy products taken over from Hindustan Lever, helped no doubt by the considerable technological capability it will acquire from Lever, which will go on to what are known as hi-tech areas, such as fine chemicals and fertilisers.

The new reorganisation was not just a brainwave but is evidently the result of a lot of hard thinking in Bombay, Calcutta and London, not to mention New Delhi. If it comes through unscathed, the company, which was beginning to stagnate, will be able to look forward to a spell of uninterrupted growth for the next 10 to 20 years in an area of its own choosing.

Whether what is good for Hindustan Lever or Lipton is good for the shareholders —or for the country—is a different story. But such an exercise does call for a high quality of management and intellectual endeavour and this is what ultimately distinguishes one company from another, not whether it is family-owned or family-run.

Hindustan Lever's Chairman, Ashok Ganguly, happens to be an employee of the company he heads; but had the company belonged to his family, would he have acted differently? I think not. What we need right now are more Gangulys and Moolgaokars and Ambanis, and not more Swraj Pauls, thank you.

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DCM/ESCORTS

Stock Taking

THE NEWSPAPER headlines had shifted to other subjects, but the battle for control of Escorts and the Delhi Cloth and General Mills (DCM) continued without let up last month. The stock market bubbled over with excitement till mid-May, when DCM shares topped the Rs 90 mark—up from less than Rs 35 at the end of January. Escorts in turn crossed the Rs 80 barrier.

The rest of the share market soon caught the non-resident fever. Rumours raged about first one company and then another being raided by non-resident Indians. With each fresh rumour, share prices zoomed. Arresting what was till then a steady decline in prices, shares gained by as much as 25 per cent in a fortnight.

Swadeshi Polytex shot up from Rs 20.50 to Rs 34.50, Shriram Fibres (of the DCM group) from Rs 28.25 to Rs 36, Premier Automobiles from Rs 240 to Rs 290, Larsen & Toubro from Rs 53 to Rs 65.

Battle Continued: But the spotlight remained focused on DCM and Escorts. Marking a new phase in the battle, however, the action shifted from the floor of the stock exchanges to quieter arenas. With the Escorts annual shareholders' meeting billed for June 9, London-based marauder Swraj Paul's brokers lodged a record 4.63 lakh Escorts shares for transfer of ownership. That was 3.5 per cent of the company's total share capital, and insiders suggested that Paul had held back another 2 per cent or so.

Meeting under the shadow of the approaching shareholders' meeting, the Escorts board of directors deferred a decision on the brokers' share transfer application, appointing a sub-committee to examine the applications. That effectively prevented Paul from having any say at the annual meeting. In any case, there seemed little likelihood that the board would approve Paul's becoming a major shareholder.

Nevertheless, Escorts Chairman H.P. Nanda was busy covering his flanks. Buying shares through the trusts under his control, rounding up proxy votes from the existing shareholders, and getting friends and associates to lend a hand by buying yet more of the company's shares, Nanda increased his control of the equity base to an imposing 25 per cent. With 54 per cent already with three public sector financial institutions, Nanda clearly had numbers on his side.

Step Ahead: Not satisfied with this, Nanda went a step further. In a move clearly designed to pre-empt Paul, he proceeded to get his friends and associates abroad to buy into Escorts. Since the Government had announced that non-residents could buy 5 per cent of a company's shares, Nanda clearly meant to present Paul with a *fait accompli* by saying that the non-resident quota of 5 per cent had already been used up.

But for all of Nanda's defensive manoeuvres, the battle was still on. Paul himself sounded as confident and unrelenting as ever, arguing that the 5 per cent ceiling did not apply to him since he had bought the shares before May 2—the date when the Government announced the 5 per cent ceiling. Officials were unable or unwilling to clarify the point, but the point seemed open enough to leave the ultimate issue in doubt.

Paul had, meanwhile, declined to fight in any arena not of his choosing. Realising that the mood at the shareholders' meeting would be heavily in favour of the Nandas, he declared that he would stay away ("They can have a comfortable night"). Clearly, he intended this to be a long drawn-out battle. People close to him said the battle was far from over. Instead, "it has just begun".

Uncertain Future: Sensing the uncertainty over future moves, the share market responded with a sudden drop in prices, though restrained buying continued. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that there was no non-resident interest in any of the other companies, and that the sudden spurt in

SWRAJ PAUL

"I Am Not Quitting"

SWRAJ Paul certainly enjoys a brawl. And three months into the battle over Delhi Cloth and General Mills (DCM) and Escorts, the London-based businessman was as hard-hitting in his comments as ever, vowing not to sell out, and declaring that he wasn't "really enjoying" the uproar he had caused in the Indian business community.

Last fortnight, he spoke on the telephone to INDIA TODAY *Editor* AROON PURIE *on the fracas over his acquisition of* DCM *and Escorts shares. Declining to disclose his total shareholdings in either company, and insisting that he had not even thought of staking a claim to a place on the boards of the companies, he nevertheless launched a verbal onslaught on the families now controlling the two firms. Some of his comments:*

Paul: tough talk

On his future intentions:

I will not allow them to get away with doing all sorts of things which are not in the interest of all the shareholders, and at the cost of the company mind you. Nobody is interested in a take-over, but the company should be run for the benefit of the shareholders, not for the families who consider themselves the so-called owners without being the owners. This is the only issue left at the moment.

On how companies should be run:

I think in the end companies must be managed by people who have nothing to gain except their remuneration. There should be no hidden remuneration. Once people are paid to run those companies, they have no interest whether they should be looking after one shareholder or the other. That is what we must bring in India, like in any other country.

On whether he will stake a claim to a place on the boards of the companies:

I have investments in the United States, Japan and Canada and nowhere have I asked for a seat on the

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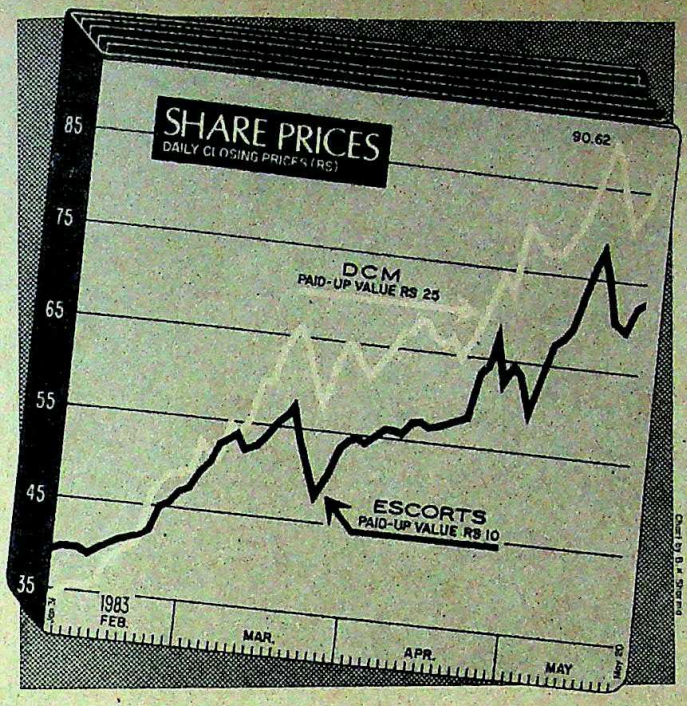

likely the result of promo- families covering their posi- by increasing their share- ings. Commented a leading broker and financial ana- in Bombay: "Both specula- and the managements selves have been buying in panies where the manage- have very low holdings. body is going to stay put on financial holdings now that has happened." Analysts felt that the real reason for sudden spurt in the prices of like Century, TELCO, Pre- Automobiles and others that these were sound com that would take off on market if there was bullish ing of the future.

Meanwhile, papers were ulating in Delhi about the record of the Apeejay of companies (run by s three brothers in India). liamentary proceedings of 1950s and 1960s showed that a number of jay concerns had been blacklisted by Government at various times for a varie- of reasons; apart from everything else, could prove useful reasons for denying transfer of shares to "undesirable" stors.

Surprise Visit: In the midst of all this action, Nanda unexpectedly took off on a fortnight's visit to London, setting off speculation that a compromise move might be on. But Nanda denied any such intention, and Paul when contacted at his London office fulminated about the fact that Nanda was "campaigning all over the town making all sorts of remarks. Why doesn't he come to me? I am perhaps one of his largest shareholders." Matters were much quieter on the DCM front, where company Chairman Bharat Ram chose to adopt a low profile. His youngest son, Vivek Bharat Ram, had in fact met Paul briefly in early April—a meeting which no one in the family is willing to talk about. But here too there seemed little hard evidence of any patch-up.

Both Bharat Ram and Nanda, however, felt that their positions were now much more secure than earlier. The 5 per cent ceiling on non-resident holdings was a major reassurance, and Rajiv Gandhi's forthright comments in Parliament about the dangers of an open invitation to non-resident investors seemed to provide insurance against any deal being struck with the financial institutions. And Delhi was agog with rumours that Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee was on his way out, partly because of his role in the whole affair.

But if Paul's consistently buoyant and aggressive mood was any indication, the battle was far from over, although the domestic industrialists had shored up their defences. —T.N. NINAN with bureau reports

board. But on the other hand I am also confident that a 2 per cent or 3 per cent shareholder won't call a company as if it is his hereditary company of his own and also won't wreck the company for protecting his own position.... There are a lot of companies where I have stakes from 5 per cent to 20 per cent. I have never asked for a seat on the board, nor am I bothered. I know my interest is safe if the management does not do anything which is of the nature of discrimination between one shareholder and another.

On changing the management:

If the prime minister of a country can be changed within 24 hours what is so holy about the chairman of the company?

On the Government imposing a 5 per cent ceiling on non-resident investment:

I am nobody sitting here to decide what the Government should do and should not do. Fortunately one thing they have done is they have not changed the rules for something which has already been done. I understand the 5 per cent ceiling is not applicable to what has been done already.

On H.P. Nanda and his sons being appointed by the board and approved by the shareholders to run Escorts:

That is because no shareholders have ever questioned before, and I will question every time.

On the unfair tax advantages he has as a non-resident:

I have to pay 52 per cent tax in this country, whether I make the investment in United States or India or anywhere. If in India the tax is 22.5 per cent, they will deduct 22.5 per cent. Here I will pay the difference between 52 and 22.5 per cent. They have unnecessarily brought this tax issue, and they know they are throwing wool in the public's eyes.

On likely developments in the future:

I do not know. I am not quitting. After all the abuses they have hurled at me, I won't leave them comfortable.

On the blacklisting of Apeejay firms by the Government in the 1950s and 1960s:

All I can say is these very people have started a smear campaign. They have never allowed any individual outside themselves to get up... They have done it with every new person who has tried to raise his head. If you have done something wrong and you have been punished for it, then you are not going to have it for the rest of your life. Can they look at themselves and say they have a clean record? If they think they can cow down Swraj Paul they are mistaken.

On whether he will be present at the Escorts annual meeting on June 9:

I definitely won't be there. They can have a comfortable night.

On whether he expects a problem in registering the shares he has bought:

They said they won't register them. I hope they don't do that because basically they will be downgrading their share scrip... If any chairman even thought of a thing like this here, I'm sure they will be censured by the stock exchanges.

On why he has held back transfer of some of the shares he has bought:

We can do it slowly. Let them sweat it out a bit.

On how the companies' shareholders have responded to his share acquisition:

I have received a lot of letters and cables from the shareholders supporting me, they are almost telling me, 'Mr Paul, you have come as an angel'.

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EXCISE DUTY

A Crushing Verdict

RARELY has so much money hung in the balance over a single court verdict. So when the Supreme Court handed down its landmark judgement last fortnight on a series of bitterly fought excise cases, alarm bells rang in many corporate board rooms. Hundreds of companies found that they were now liable to pay staggering sums as accumulated excise duties—liabilities that in many cases exceeded the company's profits or reserves.

Estimates of the sums involved varied from Rs 400 crore to over Rs 1,000 crore, without any precise figure being available from either the Government or the companies. But even the more modest estimates suggested that large numbers of companies would be scraping the barrel, borrowing heavily from the banks or even faced with the possibility of having to hock assets in order to meet the taxman's bill. Said industrialist K.K. Modi: "If the Government asks us to pay the accumulated taxes straightaway, many companies may simply have to close down."

(From left) K.K. Modi, R.P. Goenka and Sanjay Dalmia: rude shock

At issue in the court cases was the simple question of defining manufacturing cost, on which excise is levied, and identifying the items that constitute post-manufacturing expenses, on which excise duty cannot be charged. The question had far-reaching implications for many industries where the excise rates are high—cigarettes, tyres, synthetic fibre and yarn. The companies had been claiming that items like advertising cost, and expenditure on packaging, freight and distribution were not a part of manufacturing cost. Many high court benches had upheld this view, while a few had upheld the Government's opposite contention that all these items could be charged excise. The cases finally ended up in the Supreme Court—by which time some of them were nearly a decade old. The Government itself had shown increasing testiness over the issue, with Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee repeatedly warning industrialists against frivolous litigation over tax matters (INDIA TODAY, February 15, 1983).

So the judgement, when it came, opened the floodgates for massive tax demands. Reliance Textile Industries would have to pay Rs 40 crore for just one year's liability on account of what had been claimed by the company as post-manufacturing expenses. ITC, the cigarette giant, said it would have to pay about Rs 20 crore, though a confidential government document put the company's liability at over Rs 100 crore. The cigarette industry as a whole, according to the note, would have to pay Rs 220 crore—and this would have to come from no more than half a dozen companies.

The tyre industry was a second major casualty, since the companies had been claiming 10 per cent of total costs as post-manufacturing expenses. The tyre companies themselves estimated a total tax liability of between Rs 100 crore and Rs 150 crore—to be paid by a handful of companies. The precise sums were still unclear because the Supreme Court had allowed two items as genuine post-manufacturing expenses, freight and trade discounts, plus special packing costs. A good bit of the disputed sums can be accounted for under these heads, so the total liability could be substantially less than the initial guesstimates. Nevertheless, the quantum of money involved was staggering.

Quite apart from the sums themselves, the crucial question was whether the companies concerned had set apart the disputed tax claims—and the astonishing answer was that many had not. Said V. Naraya... chairman of Goodyear: "Industry was ... optimistic that their view would be upheld ... the courts.... Now the judgement is nega... ve, so this will cause hardship for indus... because the money has not been set aside ... used as working capital." Narayanan exp... ned that with the tyre industry becom... very competitive because of unused produ... tion capacity, the companies had to p... their products competitiv... in an effort to maximise sa...

Various Explanations: ... milar explanations emer... from other corporate chie... Sanjay Dalmia, president ... Golden Tobacco (which e... pects to pay Rs 12 crore ... more on account of the Supr... me Court verdict), said: "... have passed on the benefit ... this disputed sum to the co... sumer." In other words, t... company did not hold back the money ... case it became payable to the Governme...

But there were other companies th... had played it safe: a Reliance Textiles spok... sman said the company would merely ha... to go back to its old level of working capi... borrowings in order to pay the tax. ITC, ... milarly, has invested some of its disput... money in units of the Unit Trust of India ... kept it in other short-run assets. A compa... spokesman said the company would be ab... to meet its tax liability, which he said did n... exceed Rs 20 crore.

Nevertheless, industry ... a whole was already raising ... chorus about the problem... that would be involved ... paying up all the money in o... go. Said K.K. Modi: "... have suggested that a speci... committee representing bo... the Government and indust... be established to see how t... money can be paid. The pa... ment will have to be staggere... over eight to 10 years, or t... Government will have to provide some for... of special credit. You must remember th... the tax dues have accumulated over a peri... of 10 years, and in some cases the amou... are more than the net worth of companie...

Non-industry spokesmen, however, ... had little sympathy for such claims. Said a ... head of a public sector financial institution: "This was not their money to start with. They made unethical use of it to finance ...

Even the more modest estimates suggested that large numbers of companies would be scraping the barrel, borrowing from the banks or even faced with the possibility of having to hock assets in order to meet the taxman's bill.

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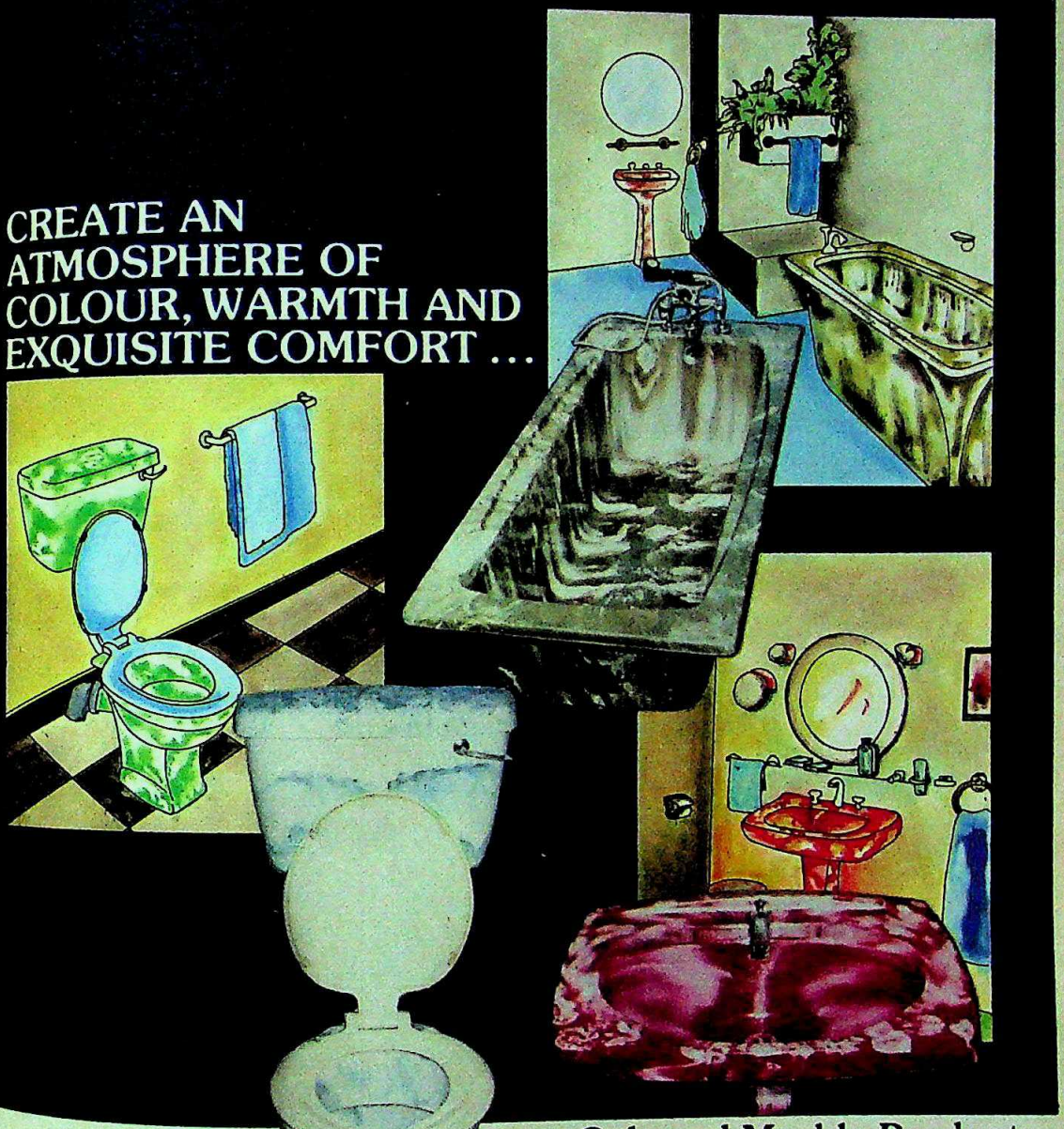

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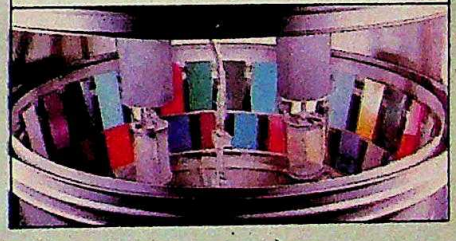

GARWARE गरवारे

Garware Paints

Not just good looking. Tough.

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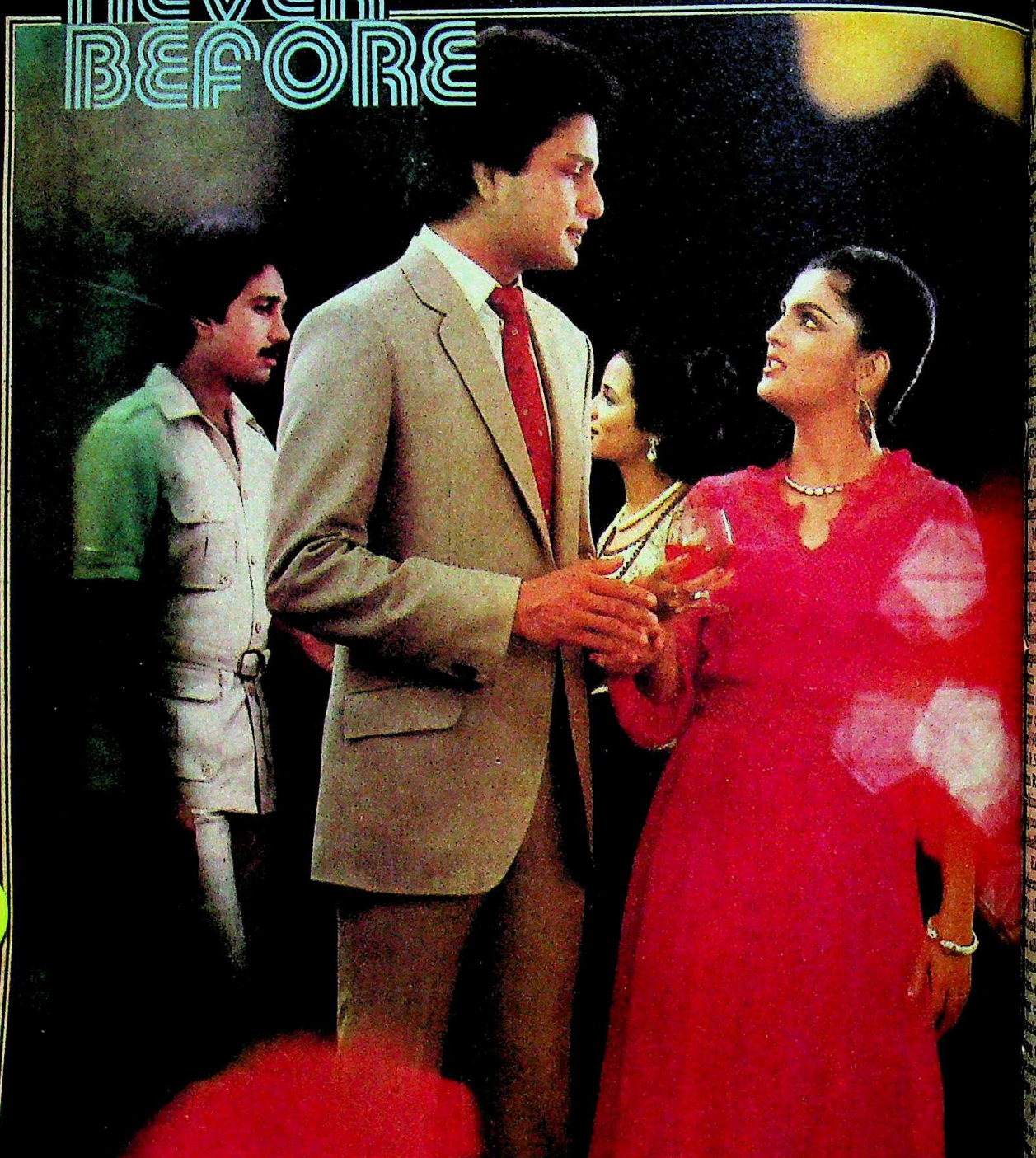

The Summer Revolution

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...nd working. Now it is shocking that ...ould be asking for a protection which ...e not deserve. It is a bad practice and ...short-sighted."

MANY of the comapnies that exploited this legal point to the maximum were in the forefront of the domestic company take-over spree, leading to speculation that tax money was financing the takeovers. The Modis, R.P. Goenka and ...Dalmia are typical examples, and ...may well be a fourth. Others who suddenly enjoyed surplus liquidity because of the dispute lent the money out on the ...corporate market, causing a sudden ...in the interest rates some time ago.

Not surprisingly, many industrialists themselves tended to agree with the Government that much of the litigation had been frivolous, and designed largely to latch on to a ...thing and use disputed sums as tax-free ...Bharat Ram, chairman of DCM, felt ...Government was fully justified in what it ...done, while L.M. Thapar felt many ...panies had jumped on the bandwagon ...n they knew they did not have any case.

Many companies did, in fact, play it safe ...claiming only limited sums as post-manufacturing expenses, while some did not make ...claims at all. The tyre industry by and ...claimed a hefty 10 per cent of total costs ...post-manufacturing costs, while cigarette ...panies were more modest—claiming between 1 and 2 per cent, except in one case ...the company reportedly claimed up to ...per cent. In the case of Golden Tobacco, ...1981-82 balance sheet shows that out of ...54 crore spent on packaging, no less ...Rs 6.85 crore was shown as "secondary ...ging" and charged as post-manufacturing cost. The Supreme Court judgement will ...ably mean that this is disallowed.

Encouraging Effect: Ironically, the ...gement might have the effect of encouraging the more cautious firms to now file ...claims on the items which the court ...llowed as genuine post-manufacturing ...nses—and the claims could go back 35 ...s, resulting in a large outgo from govern... coffers. Official spokesmen refused to ...ate on the financial sums involved, ar... that they were still working out both ...mediate as well as long-term implica... of what the court had ruled.

Whatever the sums finally add up to, ...not the end of the tax story. For one ...hundreds of excise and customs cases ...ing other issues are still pending in the ...me Court and the high courts. Companies could be faced with yet more tax demands as and when these cases are decided ...the Government has been making ...effort to speed up matters. The official ...three months ago was that Rs 2,000 crore were locked up in all tax cases put together.

This may not be the end of the matter in another respect as well. For in many high-tax industries, playing around with tax liabilities has become a major corporate pre-occupation. Tyre industry insiders were arguing last fortnight, that since the Supreme Court had allowed trade discounts as a post-manufacturing expense while disallowing advertising expenditure on this account, the companies would try to reduce their tax liability by raising the trade discount and asking the distributors to use the extra money for advertising the company's products.

Tax Games: In cigarettes, yet other games were going on. Golden Tobacco was printing two labels for its best-selling Panama cigarettes: Rs 1.25 and Re 1.00. Observers pointed out that this was being done to reduce the tax liability on some of the packs while all the cigarettes would be sold in the market at the higher price. A company spokesman pointed out that the two price tags were for different brands, and there was as a matter of fact a difference in the two packets: in tiny type, one claimed to be "special virginia" while the other said it was "virginia special".

The industry as a whole was playing other tax games. In the last budget, a new pattern of duties, in effect, caused a steep increase in taxes on cigarettes. But most companies either did not raise the printed prices of cigarettes or raised them only marginally. What they did do, instead, was to raise the price to the dealer—thereby reducing the dealer commission sharply. Inevitably, the dealers have been selling the cigarettes to all consumers at more than the printed price, while the Government gets tax revenue only on the printed price.

While declining to accept that they were indulging in illegal or even questionable activity, industrialists made the point that malpractices resulted only when the tax burden became unbearable and made industrial prosperity difficult if not impossible. "The root cause of all the tax malpractices is the high rates of tax, and the sooner the Government realises this the better," said the spokesman of one cigarette company.

On a broader front, the demand was being made that since the Supreme Court had handed down a verdict that gave the Government a lot of money, the Government should now respond by lowering the effective tax rates on highly taxed industries. While there was no response immediately from the Government, it seemed clear at the end of last fortnight that a battle for lower tax burdens that had been lost in court would continue to be fought—in other forums, and with different weapons.

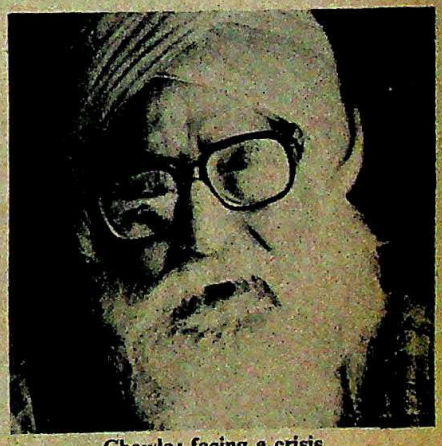
—T.N. NINAN with CHANDER UDAY SINGH

AMRITSAR

Alarming Slump

BUSINESSMEN in Amritsar tell a particular story again and again. Deputy Inspector-General of Police A.S. Atwal was murdered just outside the Golden Temple on April 25, around 11.30 in the morning. By 1 in the afternoon, they say, visiting traders from outside the state who came to do business with their Amritsar fellows, had checked out of their hotels and had fled the town by the first available train.

Exaggerated or not, the story of fleeing business is a grim reality in Amritsar. The violence in Punjab has frightened outstation buyers and traders to such an extent that production in all sectors of Amritsar industry is down 40 per cent. Small-scale sector



Chawla: facing a crisis

units, turning out goods worth Rs 50 crore annually are in shambles; a bare dozen of the 100-odd middle level units are still in operation; and the textile industry, the veritable backbone of Amritsar business, with annual production worth Rs 500 crore, is facing a credit squeeze and a 50 to 70 per cent rise in raw material prices. Bhagwan Singh Chawla, president of the Amritsar Beopar Mandal, says despairingly: "The damage to business is colossal."

Business Slump: Stories of woe are heard everywhere in the town's katras and bazaars. Jain Brothers of Katra Ahluwalia, cloth traders, report that sales are down by 40 per cent. Satish Kumar Jain, a general merchandise dealer, reports a 50 per cent drop in sales; asks Jain: "Where are the buyers?" Aggarwal Traders had sold yarn worth Rs 1.35 crore last year, when the prices were 30 per cent less than what they are now; this year they expect sales to touch only Rs 85

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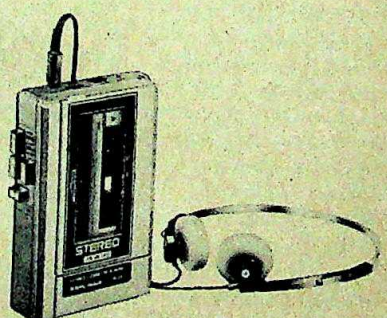

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Rs 90 lakh. The Amritsar Swadeshi Mills, which exports 70 per cent of ce, is facing a 30 per cent drop in the leading supplier of yarn to the ers, but as these are not able to goods, they cannot pay the mill. cannot pay its creditors. The mill's partner, Vinod Khanna, says des- "We are doing our best, but we were in a peaceful area."

Bodh Raj Chopra (left) and Parduman Singh: losing business

troubles have also made a big dent tourist trade. The 100-odd hotels of , including three three-star hotels, 15 per cent to 20 per cent occupancy this, the tourist season. Complains H.S. Sharma: "Who will risk his life here?"

the 50,000 workers of Amritsar, the is fast deteriorating into a nightma- door Ekta Union President Pardu- gh estimates that at least 25 per cent 's workers are out of work. Says one needs peace more than the poor. siness means hunger for the hun- poor who live from hand to mouth." dh Raj Chopra, secretary of the Knitwears Association, puts it more : "In a situation where you are in- where trigger-happy anti-social ele- rule and where the police cannot emselves, is any industrial produc- ible? But we strive to do the impos- Many of the 200 members of the asso- have been looking for safer pastures p units.

ner Pastures: In fact, a mini-exod- ers to be on. While many woollen cket-making units have purchased ound Panipat, 100 km from Delhi prices have reportedly doubled there small knitwear and synthetic cloth moving out to Surat and Ahmeda- a number have already set up opera- e. Evidently, however, the old han- see the present troubles through. Says ukhore, a 75-year-old cloth dealer: an industrial unit is not that easy. e no choice but to stick to our guns. to survive or sink in Amritsar." ew traders blame the media for crea- e. Says Vijay Khanna from Surat: "It is not the violence that frightens the buyers. If there were no newspapers, the harm to Amritsar trade would not have been even half what it is now." But the damage has been done and, in addition to the diminishing numbers of buyers, credit has been slashed. Laments Kirpal Singh, a prominent mill owner: "Bank credit is nearly zero. Even short-term lending to facilitate trade transactions is being discouraged. Outside traders do not trust us. All buying and selling is in cash. How can we survive?"

The businessmen fear total ruin if the present explosive situation lasts another year. An appeal to Akali morcha dictator Sant Harchand Singh Longowal that "if there is no industry or trade, there will be no city", brought only pious homilies about communal harmony. The traders are now hoping against hope that things will calm down. Dev Raj, a major yarn trader of Jallianwala Bagh sums up their predicament perfectly: "Since we had tasted a bloody Partition, two deadly wars with Pakistan and fierce Akali morchas, we had a great fund of confidence. But the present morcha, the accompanying violence and inept handling by the Government are scaring away all customers." Obviously, guns and butter do not go hand in hand.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

BLADES

Cut-throat Competition

EVER since the joint sector Wiltech India, in collaboration with Britain's Wilkinson Sword, entered the Indian blade market, its world-famous trade mark —a pair of crossed swords—has better symbolised its running battle with Calcutta-based Harbanslal Malhotra, the man who pioneered blade manufacturing in India. Last fortnight, the battle acquired a sharper edge when a special bench of the Calcutta High Court threw out an appeal by the Malhotras asking for an interim injunction against Wiltech's use of a galloping horse on their "Savage" brand of blades. In their appeal, Malhotras had claimed that the galloping horse symbol had been devised by them for marketing their latest blade, "Gallant", and Wiltech had stolen the design.

Wiltech's defence was that it had designed and adopted the galloping horse logo and incorporated it into its marketing efforts as early as May 1981. Two months later, the company applied for registration of the brand names with the logo. Malhotras, on the other hand, introduced Gallant into the market in January 1982 and only applied for registration a few months later. The application is still pending.

Significant Point: Further, Wiltech scored some solid points when it deposed before the court that within the first two months of commercial production of Savage in April 1982, they had produced 3.36 lakh blades compared to the relatively meagre 2,000 blades manufactured by Malhotras in the same period.

Though the Malhotras are certain to appeal against the judgement, the courtroom battle has only served to re-emphasise the cut-throat nature of the Wiltech-Malhotra corporate confrontation. In July last year, Wiltech had obtained a stay order from the Bombay High Court restraining Malhotras from marketing their Wilton WII shaving system on the grounds that it was a copy of their Wilman system—an ironical reversal of the current legal fracas involving the two in Calcutta.

The root cause of the trouble is of course the fact that Malhotras have reigned supreme on the Indian blade market for close to half a century now and Wiltech's noisy arrival on the scene last year has posed a serious challenge. The other is the seemingly deliberate similarity between brand names and logos hat has left consumers bewildered, to say the least.

Apart from the galloping horse that is currently being disputed, both companies have product names that start with "Wil" and invariably end in "II". Says Malhotra spokesman K.L. Sawhney: "One reason why we decided to fight on the horse issue was that the common symbol could cause considerable problems in the districts where people generally relate to symbols." Now that the fight is out in the open, it would appear that the real symbol of the battle is not Wiltech's crossed swords but the name on the disputed blade—Savage.

—SUMANTA SEN

Wiltech's 'Savage' blades and Malhotras' 'Gallant' brand: sharp tactics

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triking Change

THE DECISION heralded a prospect of far-reaching changes in the status of industrial disputes in the country. aside past practice, legal precedent inhibitions inherent in laid-down ure and practice, Supreme Court D.A. Desai and O. Chinnappa last month adopted a unique ach to labour versus management dis- when they adopted the role of both tor and arbitrator rather than merely on the legal issues involved. Virtual- ring the actual prayers on a question rpretation of law by the strike-bound taff of Bombay Dyeing and Manufac- Company and instead intervening into the subject-matter of the dis- the court passed inte- rders which were a g departure from the

The directions included ng the prosperous tex- ill management and taff to begin serious ions towards resol- e disputes over wage , an order to the y to pay their de- for house rent and ravel allowances, and nsense direction to triking workmen to work on May 9, after ering 603 days out in the cold. The 350 and office staffers of Bombay Dyeing holding company Nowsorjee Wadia ans Private Limited, re-entered the -old textile corporation's stately offi- Bombay's Ballard Estate.

Mehta: jubilant

New Hope: Crowed Free Trade Unions dia (FTUI) strongman R.J. Mehta, Mumbai Mazdoor Sabha had led the on the grounds that no wage revisions aken place in the booming company 1975: "The Supreme Court has resto- our's faith in the judiciary at a time e believed that the courts were ably management-oriented and delay- Our interim orders have struck at the the management strategy by causing ble and vexatious delays by misusing ers."

Admitted Bombay Dyeing Vice-Presi- S. Pal: "It's a decision with breath- ramifications and I don't think the re- ship between management and labour be the same." Pal insists that the Su- Court has never used this approach to disputes in the past. Instead of merely deciding on the legal issue before it, the court went much further into the reasons behind the crippling 20-month strike and ways of bringing the parties involved together, so that meaningful negotiations could be initiated. The actual petition which asked that a Bombay industrial court ruling be set aside and Mehta's union recognised as the workers' representative, was made redundant by the court's order that the parties begin a negotiation; and clear-cut orders from the bench made it clear that any attempts at further stalling the issues involved would leave the court with no option but to intervene once again and go into the merits of each demand.

Behind the unique interim order in the Bombay Dyeing case lay a crippling 20-month strike —the longest strike ever, and strangely enough it was in the traditionally docile white-collar office staff and not the mill-hands, who later went on a separate strike along with other Bombay textile mills—which threatened to continue indefinitely. Negotiations had repeatedly fallen through, since at each successive round the textile corporation further lowered its offer to the striking workmen.

Delays: Starting with an offer to increase the wage bill on office staff by 20 per cent in May 1980, the company progressively reduced this offer to around 10 per cent against the workmen's demand of 38 per cent, justifying this in retrospect by the argument that the textile strike in their mill, had eroded capacity to pay. Bogged down in long-drawn-out litigations as a result, the dispute could conceivably have continued another few years. Repeated offers by the union to refer the matter to private arbitration were turned down by the Bombay Dyeing management, and even suggestions on two occasions by Bombay High Court Justices S.K. Desai and Dharmadhikari, that arbitrators be appointed, were rejected out of hand.

Finally last March, Mehta's application for recognition as the representative union under the Industrial Disputes Act was rejected by the Bombay Industrial Court on technical grounds. Stating in his order that Mehta's union clearly had the support of more than the minimum 30 per cent of the workmen—the actual support was 91 per cent up to December 1981 and over 57 per cent in the next five months reviewed —the court nevertheless refused recognition on the grounds that Mehta had collected his union dues in a lump sum rather than monthly as laid down in the law. "We do not dispute that it was a technical decision or that Mehta had the majority of workmen behind him," explained Ramesh D. Patil, personnel manager for Bombay Dyeing, "but does this justify the sort of directions given by the Supreme Court? The court could have sent it back to the industrial court for review and directed them not to be hypertechnical. As a student of industrial relations I feel it would be a much healthier trend to follow the laid-down procedures."

But the Supreme Court appears to have taken the unconventional step precisely because the laid-down procedures were being used to frustrate any hopes of restoration of harmony. Negotiations had come to a complete halt. Arbitration offers, included Mehta's suggestion that Jamshed Guzdej, a director of the company who has arbitrated between Mehta and other employers in the past, be allowed to come to a mutually beneficial decision. The dispute had assumed the proportions of a legal wrangle tied up in unending court cases in a multitude of courts. Although the workmen were paid Rs 400 per month throughout the strike, the Mumbai Mazdoor Sabha doled out over Rs 19 lakh in strike wages. The hardship and humiliation for striking workmen looked like never ending, giving the Supreme Court pressing grounds for direct intervention.

Criticism: Labour lawyers in Bombay are nevertheless shaken by this fresh evidence of dynamic jurisprudence from the Supreme Court and apprehensive of the effect this might have on other labour disputes. Said Maneck A. Gagrat, an eminent labour lawyer who, though unconnected with the case, has followed it closely: "I appreciate that the employer was wrong in not coming to the negotiating table, and ignoring the many mediators and others who tried to effect a reconciliation. I also fully agree that on the grounds of equity and social justice the court can enforce a negotiation. But when there is an existing law which gives the Government the right and duty to order conciliation proceedings or an industrial tribunal, the Supreme Court could have directed the Government to perform its duty. I think the court has clearly overstepped its jurisdiction and laid down a bad precedent."

Last fortnight, with the 350 employees back at their desks, the company's management was working out a strategy for the negotiations which must take place before September 1, 1983, when the Supreme Court has called both parties for further hearings.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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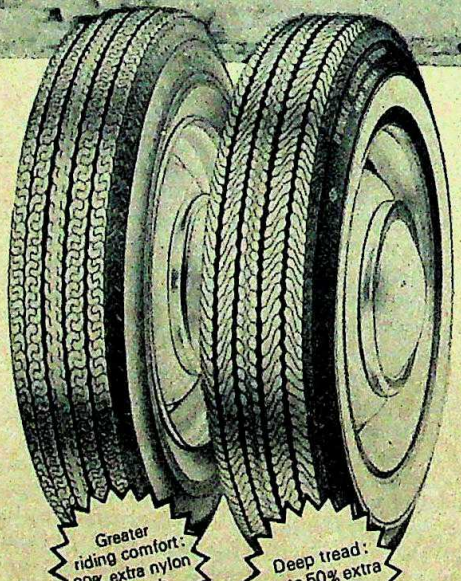

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GOODYEAR

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...RIAL OUTLOOK

...gns Of Hope

...THE recession over? The answer to ... crucial question would appear to ... a qualified yes. Although some in... continue to be in the doldrums, ...alists around the country are show... first hesitant signs of optimism in a ...ise. And some company chairmen, ...ing annual meetings in recent weeks, ...oken airily of future prospects and an ...ement in demand. Among these are ...ies that complained earlier about ... markets but which in the last two ... have shown a turnaround.

...his new trend is far from universal, but ...fficiently widespread to suggest that ...rst of the slump may be over. A crucial ...ry like textiles, which contributes a ... 20 per cent of total industrial pro..., has begun to overcome the com... effects of lower production due to the ...ng Bombay mills strike and the depre... consumer demand. Said Ashok ..., the youthful chairman of Morarjee ...ttes Mills, a large modern textile unit ...mbay: "Demand is definitely better ...efore, and April was positively good. ... were maintained at earlier levels, but ...nd a steady market emerging, with a ...er flow of money than in the past year. ...re is even a reasonable monsoon then ...gs are bound to look up."

Better Results: The outlook for some ...r industries, reeling till a short while ago ... the effects of declining demand, ap... similarly improved. Some tyre com... have shown improved results, despite ...cks in production and lower demand ... tractor and heavy vehicle manufac...rs, and the chairmen of these companies, ...king at annual meetings in May, an...ced that prospects were even brighter. ...Automobile ancillary units too have ...ted encouraging improvement: last mo... Associated Bearings Chairman Akbar ...n declared that the worst was over for ...ries, adding that a marked improve... in the production and offtake of com...cial vehicles as well as diesel pumps and ...ers augured well for bearing manufac... Commercial vehicles, pulling rapidly ... of the slump in 1982–83 (which, the ...merce Research Bureau estimates, saw ...uction drop by 6.3 per cent), were last ...ght being produced in increasing ...ities.

Industries like soda ash, polyester yarn ...pecial steels had been pushed last year ...negative growth because of liberalised ...rt policies that allowed virtual dumping ...foreign manufacturers. Soda ash production declined from 6.39 lakh tonnes to 6.10 lakh tonnes in 1982–83, and the production of polyester staple fibre in the first quarter of 1983, at 5,320 tonnes, was down 15.5 per cent compared to the corresponding period of 1982. But recent changes, after the Central budget, have made it probable that some of the import problems may cease. In some cases, budgetary levies raised customs duties, while in others the Government has declared that importers must register their

Shah (left) and Mandelia: differing views

requirements with official authorities. Imports are thus less of a danger for them.

Qualified Improvement: Said D.R. Pendse, economic adviser to the Tata group of industries: "I would certainly not say that there is an upsurge, but the recession is largely taken care of in these industries which were deeply in trouble last year." Added politician-industrialist Viren Shah, whose Mukand Iron and Steel Company last year suffered cutbacks in production and a dropping off in demand because of competition from imported steels: "I think we have seen the valley, and things should be very much better this year than in the last. Inventories are very much lower, duty increases (on imports) have made us more competitive, and most importantly the psychology of recession is ceasing to operate among consumers and users."

This trend is not universal. Viscose fibre and yarn units continue to be in trouble, partly because of imports and partly because of a switch in demand to polyester and nylon blended fabrics. Gwalior Rayon, the giant in the field, suffered sharply lowered sales and profits last year because of depressed demand, and continues to be in the doldrums. Said D.P. Mandelia, special adviser to Gwalior Rayon and other companies managed by G.D. Birla: "Productivity in our industry has been hit by unnecessary imports, and I do not see any economic revival in these conditions. The Government has been using a good remedy badly."

Similar sentiments are expressed by Shantilal Somaiya, president of the Indian Merchants Chamber and director of the diversified Somaiya group of industries which include sugar manufacture, industrial alcohol, chemicals, cables and steel fabrication: "The demand for PVC-coated power cables has declined so sharply that today we cannot even sell our inventories at a 45 per cent discount from the list prices of two years ago. The electricity boards are so tight for finances that they are not paying the bills of their suppliers." The impecuniosity of the electricity boards is causing problems in other industries, like aluminium. Mandelia, whose responsibility extends to Hindustan Aluminium Corporation, argues that the situation here is getting worse rather than better.

Despite these and other problem areas, there are signs of improvement in numerous fields. The production of saleable steel was 4.1 per cent higher in March 1983 than a year earlier. Power generation, according to the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), was 15.6 per cent higher in March than in February, and 9.6 per cent higher than in March 1982. Tractor sales, which had been depressed owing to tight credit to farmers, had picked up after liberalised credit facilities were announced some time ago. And in paper, which in the first nine months of 1982–83 saw a 2.1 per cent drop in production, the Government announced a 28 per cent price increase for white printing paper, thereby giving the industry a financial boost if nothing else. Even fertilisers, which faced a stagnation in demand because of the drought and price increases, were being produced and sold in greater quantities by manufacturers like Indian Explosives.

Monsoon Necessity: However, even the most optimistic industrialists and economists were stressing caution in their predictions. Since consumer demand is ultimately dependent to an overwhelming degree on the rural economy, analysts warned that only a reasonable monsoon could ensure that the initial improvement of the past quarter would burgeon into full-blooded recovery and growth. Said Somaiya: "The sectoral pick-up we are witnessing will not cause an overall improvement unless it is matched by rain."

Other analysts, meanwhile, were looking at longer-term trends. Said Narottam Shah of the CMIE: "Industrialists tend to complain excessively of short-term declines in their industries when in fact they should be complaining of the miserably low growth rate for industry as a whole. We should be worried because there is a steady deceleration in growth rates over the last three decades, from 7.3 per cent to 6.1 per cent and then to 4.7 per cent. We should be alarmed by this." —CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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TAMIL NADU

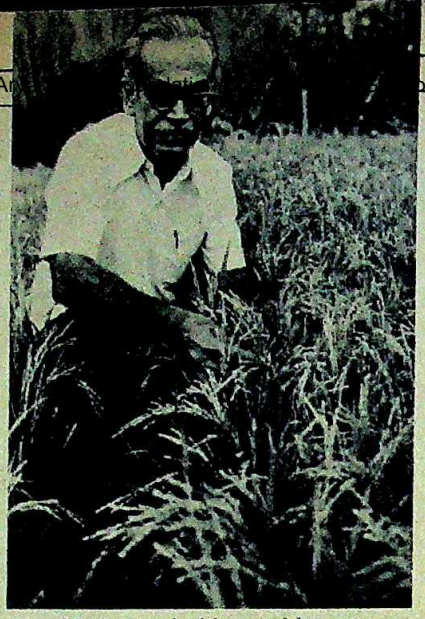
Record Crop

TAMIL Nadu has given the lie to the common belief of a paddy crop withering for lack of adequate water. Last fortnight the state Agricultural Department could definitely claim that, in spite of a severe and widespread drought, farmers in the Udumalpet taluk of Coimbatore district had, in a medium scale experiment, sown over 2,500 acres with a new strain of paddy, the IR-50, which achieved a world record yield of 2.8 tonnes per acre.

The scientifically managed experiment, was conceived and coordinated by the Joint Director of Agriculture, K. Muthuswami. The ground was moistened and kept under a mere one-and-a-half inches of water—an optimal level of irrigation, which the Public Department, faced with acute water scarcity, could only just manage to give. Other countries using this strain, such as South Korea and Japan, have achieved under controlled conditions, only 3.5 tonnes per acre while many individual farmers in Udumalpet notched up to 4 tonnes an acre.

It has however, not been merely a question of creating an agricultural record. It was gratifying to actually see the farmers having defeated the harrowing drought, now in its third agonising year. Further it was conducted scientifically, by the Agricultural Department, against heavy odds of rural illiteracy and conventional agricultural practices. Admits a veteran farmer of Kumaralingam, a village in Udumalpet: Quite a few agriculturists were ultimately forced to try out the IR-50 only in the face of the drought."

Hope Revived: The sense of fulfilment is even more because the Coimbatore farmers had given up all hope of even a spare paddy crop in the October-November season, when all they had been able to reap from their short term first crop which was sown with the usual IR-20 and TKM-9 strain, was straw. October and November 1982, were in fact, the cruellest months for the Coimbatore farmers. "The monsoons had failed for the third year in succession. The IR-20 seeds which we had sown religiously in June didn't fructify at all; what was the point of sowing if the rain Gods do not have mercy on us?" recounts Kumarasamy Pillai, a veteran farmer. There is no doubt that the authorities were very persuasive. Says a farmer, K.K. Panchalingam: "When Muthuswami and his folks, the officers of the department, landed on us with the God sent IR-50 seeds, they exhorted all of us to try out the new seeds, which could be harvested in 105 days, instead of the usual IR-20 crop. We were assured that this new variety required less water and was more resistant to pests and could of course be harvested quickly."



Muthuswami with record harvest

The Agricultural Department officials supervised the method of planting and spacing the seedlings and advised the farmers on the application of fertilisers. In a novel formula thought of by Muthuswami, the farmers were asked to apply Neemcakes over the usual area.

The inspiring-success of the experiment has been an eye opener in two ways. An unassuming but enthusiastic Muthuswami told INDIA TODAY: "We have been brought to believe that water shortage will adversely affect paddy yield. We now know from first hand experience that irrigation over an optimum level can also be harmful. Secondly, it is not the variety of seeds planted that matters. What is more crucial is the scientific management of the crop, the optimum utilisation of the available planting area and a judicious mix of chemical and bio-fertilisers." Agrees Dr V. Sivasubramanium, professor of paddy in the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore: "This experiment has demonstrated that a rich paddy yield is *non sequitur* to saturation of the paddy fields with water."

Beneficial Variety: Indeed this new strain has many benefits for the financially constrained farmer. The IR-50 crop developed by the Manila International Rice Research Institute requires the ground to be wetted only once in alternate weeks for optimal yield. While the conventional varieties like the IR-20 and TMK-9 need irrigation every week. Moreover, the rice tastes better and fetches five to ten paisa more per kilo in the market. "If we take the account of an acre of land, taking out an IR-50 crop, it costs 20 per cent less than IR-20 or TMK-9, while the revenue is 100 per cent more," says V.T. Venkatachalam, a farmer of Anaimalai village. But though in its initial stage does not require pesticides, during the of time, the new strains can become ble to pests. This occurs, according thuswami, when the seedlings are splanted and the best selected for While another consequence of not crop eugenics is the gradual le yields as well.

Admitting that the South Kore Japanese averages are national figures senting yields over several million while the Udumalpet average has recorded over a few 1,000 acres. Mu mi explained: "This time we only establish the possibility of a rich pad even in a severe drought. Besides the Korean and Japanese farmers apply much chemical fertilisers, which ap implying greater dependence on crude oil, will gradually deplete the value of the soil."

In a country where the haunting of drought is a familiar one to many such an experiment will undoubtedly de the myth of food shortages going hand with water scarcity and also give of food for future thought.

—S.H. VENKAT

THE MARKETS

Receding Tren

IT WAS too good to last and it didn't the time Finance Minister Pra Mukherjee had announced the 5 per limitation on the holdings of non-resid the tide was past its peak and the waters started receding. Some shares—Bi and Delhi Cloth Mills (DCM), for tance—continue to make a splash bu are exceptions and it is only a matter of before they too find their natural le which should be way below their cu inflated prices.

The take-over scare was a godsen market that was visibly wilting, and it f in Swraj Paul a highly generous sa daddy. Corporate reports coming in tell-tale marks of recession. Companies reported either lower turnover or profits, and often both, and the indu growth has been bruising.

Escorts, which has been making lines almost throughout the past two has reported lower sales, down to Rs crore from Rs 241 crore, and consid lower pre-tax profits, from Rs 17 crore 12 crore. Hindustan Lever lost Rs 10 in sales but managed to improve profits from Rs 41 to Rs 45 crore. Hin Aluminium had a larger turnover net profits were halved. It is n

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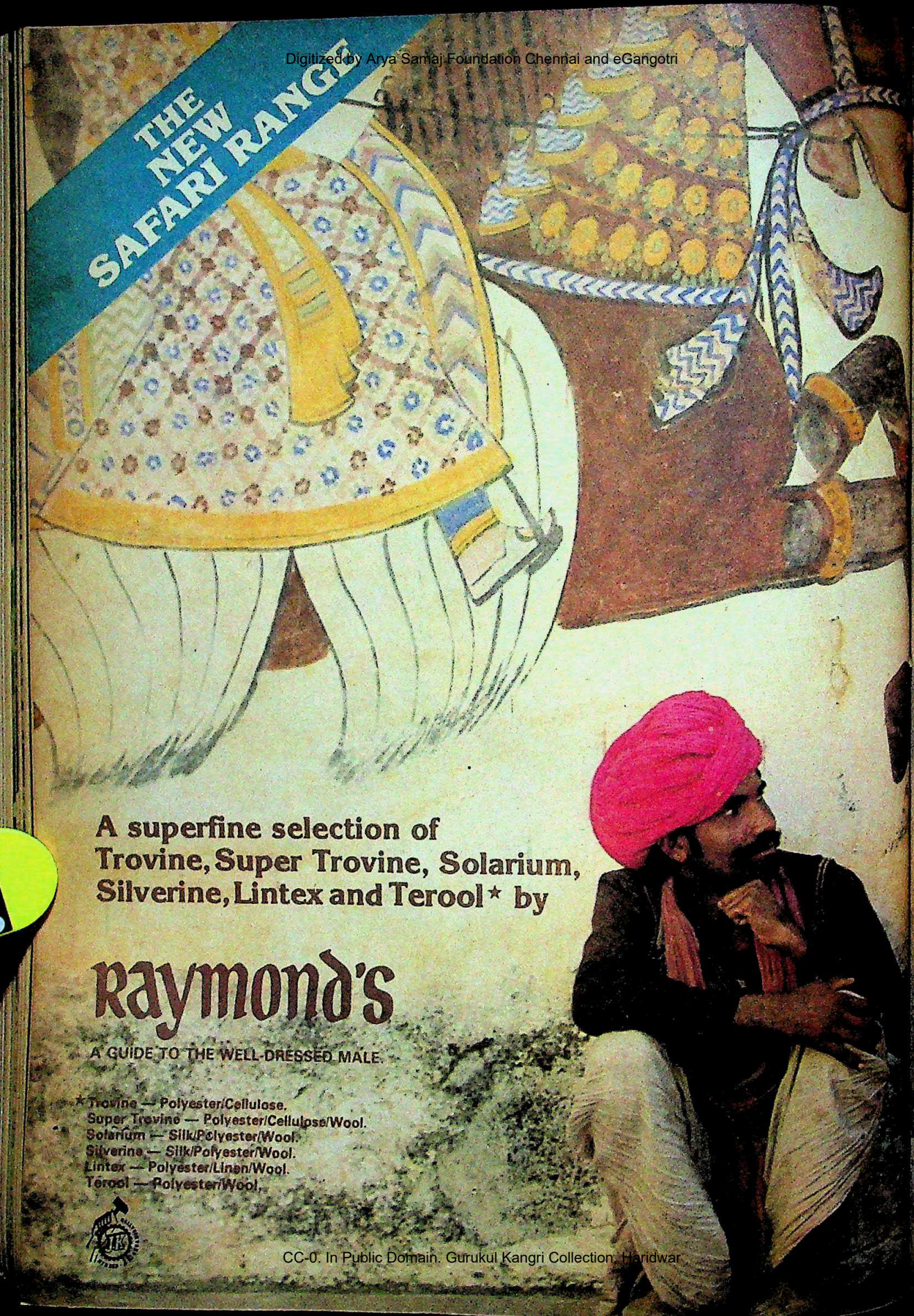

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Super Trovine — Polyester/Cellulose/Wool.
Solarium — Silk/Polyester/Wool.
Silverine — Silk/Polyester/Wool.
Lintex — Polyester/Linen/Wool.
Terool — Polyester/Wool.

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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1983	Low	Close 4.5.83	Change on Fortnight
	17.75	13.25	13.50	(0.50)
	37.65	30.75	37.65	6.30
	35.00	30.50	34.50	4.00
	451.00	350.00	439.00	22.00
(Cement)	30.00	25.00	29.00	4.00
	1,470.00	1,025.00	1,385.00	115.00
	45.00	37.40	43.50	1.90
	312.00	210.00	282.00	17.00
	25.20	18.05	25.20	2.00
	54.60	47.10	53.60	0.90
	75.00	57.50	67.00	3.00
Printing				
Industries	36.45	23.75	26.50	1.00
	1130.40	26.00	29.70	1.90
	246.50	190.00	200.00	nil
	235.00	195.00	230.00	(5.00)
	862.50	695.00	842.50	65.00
	58.50	51.00	58.50	0.50
	94.00	84.00	93.50	6.50
Cork Mills	90.62	32.31	88.87	11.50
	24.30	20.10	24.10	1.50
Hotels	29.00	20.00	27.37	4.87
	79.00	39.75	73.25	6.25
	31.50	20.00	22.00	2.00
Jam Williams	21.75	18.05	20.80	2.00
Fertilisers	490.00	429.00	451.00	(6.00)
Rayon	52.00	43.50	47.00	1.25
Aluminium	39.10	32.10	37.50	0.10
Lever	64.00	51.75	62.00	7.50
Motors	35.10	26.40	32.16	1.66
Aluminium	22.10	16.25	20.00	(0.10)
Cable	24.00	21.0	22.90	(0.60)
Explosives	26.20	22.00	24.90	1.20
Organic	35.00	25.50	31.50	3.50
Oxygen	34.50	30.40	33.75	1.05
Road	87.00	78.00	84.00	6.00
Tea	44.85	34.00	34.00	(3.50)
Synthetics	28.65	20.35	28.65	1.05
Engineering	57.50	32.00	39.50	(5.10)
	85.00	68.00	73.00	1.00
	87.00	70.00	86.00	16.00
	68.10	57.30	66.90	4.60
Engineering	163.00	68.00	74.00	(1.00)
(Madras)	24.00	18.00	22.00	1.00
& Tondro	73.00	52.00	65.00	4.00
	25.00	14.00	23.75	5.00
Machines	61.25	42.50	58.25	0.25
Cotts	22.60	16.00	16.00	nil
& Mahindra	61.00	42.00	54.50	2.50
Auther	35.37	22.69	29.75	(3.44)
Industries	292.50	225.00	262.50	30.00
Iron	24.50	19.75	23.50	3.75
Organic	26.00	20.35	24.75	4.25
	207.50	160.00	185.00	22.75
Paper	39.50	34.00	38.50	(1.00)
Electronics	47.50	40.20	46.00	2.50
Auto	30.00	24.70	29.00	2.80
	376.00	229.00	290.00	18.00
	42.00	36.00	41.50	2.50
	48.00	36.50	43.75	3.00
Road	183.00	154.00	164.25	(5.75)
Wallace	25.50	19.00	24.00	5.00
Fibres	41.25	33.20	41.25	1.25
	38.75	27.75	36.25	1.75
Products	20.50	15.25	20.00	0.55
Chemicals	47.00	38.30	44.75	2.25
	67.00	49.50	54.50	0.50
	313.50	237.00	309.00	12.00
	455.00	350.00	430.00	60.00
Investments	53.00	38.00	46.25	3.55
Cables	18.00	1600	16.50	(0.10)
Metals Block	25.10	21.50	23.00	0.90
	24.80	22.00	23.00	(1.50)
	315.00	262.00	313.00	60.00
	19.50	15.00	17.50	1.25
Hotels	28.50	22.40	28.00	1.20
	14.10	13.20	14.10	nil

less the same story everywhere.

But for the take-over scare, the market would have taken a steep plunge, and may still do so if the non-residents who, according to reports, are unhappy about the stop-go measures of the Government, withdraw completely. DCM and Escorts are still in the limelight and face a long and bruising war of nerves. At current prices, the scrips are obviously overpriced and may not stay that high for long.

Thinking Big: In the meantime, Hindustan Lever seems to have brought off something of a coup by announcing the opposite of a take-over: the company, the sixth largest in the country, is actually preparing to hive off about a fifth of its assets and pass them on to a sister company, Lipton, a single-product company that has been in the dumps for the last few years and made a comeback only a few months ago.

Unilever, the multinational food and fat giant based in Europe owns 51 per cent of Hindustan Lever's equity and 40 per cent of Lipton's equity. Hindustan Lever proposes to transfer its business outside the core sector viz. vanaspati, dairy products and animal feeds to Lipton, which will have to expand its equity fourfold to take up these new assets. Roughly half the additional equity (Rs 12 crore) will be offered to the shareholders of Hindustan Lever, and about 10 per cent to the Indian shareholders of Lipton.

It is to be seen who stands to benefit the most from this massive transfer of assets—Hindustan Lever or Lipton; but on the face of it, it looks as though the scheme is to the advantage of both. Hindustan Lever has announced an investment programme calculated to increase its assets by 50 per cent over the next few years which will take its turnover to something like Rs 750 crore. Big companies should think big, and that is what Hindustan Lever is doing.

Reducing Speculation: Escorts has announced an investment programme of Rs 130 crore in the next 3 years—bigger than that of Hindustan Lever—and this is expected to take the company's turnover to Rs 500 crore in three years' time. Will DCM also place its cards on the table and tell its shareholders what it is up to? In fact, it might be a good thing for all companies to take their shareholders into confidence—without waiting for the annual general meeting and other such formal occasions—and tell them their plans for the next few years.

American companies have a continuous dialogue with their shareholders and this is good for them as well as the stock market, for it reduces the speculative element in the market to a minimum. Let the shareholders also be treated as though they owned the company—which, of course, they do, if only on paper.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency		TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	1	As $	8.9115	8.8168
Austria	100	As Sch	57.9988	57.3745
Bahrain	1	Dinar	26.6532	26.4551
Bangladesh	100	Taka	41.4333	41.1253
Canada	1	Can $	8.2023	8.1167
Egypt	1	Egn £	12.0807	11.9909
France	1	Fr Frc	1.3588	1.3438
Hong Kong	1	HK $	1.4356	1.4200
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.0318	1.0241
Iran	100	Rial	11.7652	11.6777
Italy	100	Lt Lira	0.7903	0.6843
Japan	100	Jap Yen	4.3160	4.2668
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.7758	0.7700
Kuwait	1	Dinar	34.3847	34.1291
Malaysia	1	ML $	4.3878	4.3407
Mauritius	1	Rupee	0.8896	0.8830
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.6975	0.6923
Netherlands	1	D Glds	3.6331	3.5937
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.7886	0.7808
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.8287	4.7760
Spain	100	Sp Pt	7.3405	7.2684
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.4506	0.4473
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.3492	1.3344
Switzerland	1	Sw Frc	4.8882	4.8347
Tanzania	1	T Sch	1.0426	1.0349
Thailand	100	Baht	44.1935	43.7985
UK	1	Pound	15.6887	15.5485
USA	1	US $	10.1250	9.9875
UAE	1	Dihram	2.7194	2.7674
USSR	1	Rouble	13.8792	13.7760
W. Germany	1	DM	4.0983	4.0000

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Ltd. New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 20.5.83.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

	Latest	Change on month
PRICES		
ET Commodity Price Index*		
May 19, 1983	263.1	3.3
Cereals	265.5	(1.7)
Chemicals	362.5	4.5
Industrial Fibres	192.5	6.6
Metals	358.4	6.4
Sugar	233.6	29.1
Textile Yarns	217.5	(1.0)
Vegetable Oils	314.9	7.2
Gold, standard, May 19, 1983 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,825.00	(10.00)
Silver, .999 May 19, 1983 (Rs per kg)	3,600.00	200.00
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index*		
May 19, 1983	264.0	31.8
Cement	273.7	50.9
Chemicals	204.1	16.1
Engineering	475.4	71.6
Fertilisers	205.9	4.1
Man-made Fibres	391.9	51.4
Paper	497.0	69.0
Rubber Goods	176.4	28.0
MONEY		per cent
Money Supply, April 22, 1983		2.5
Bank Deposits		1.5
Foreign Exchange Assets		(19.7)

*1969–70 = 100

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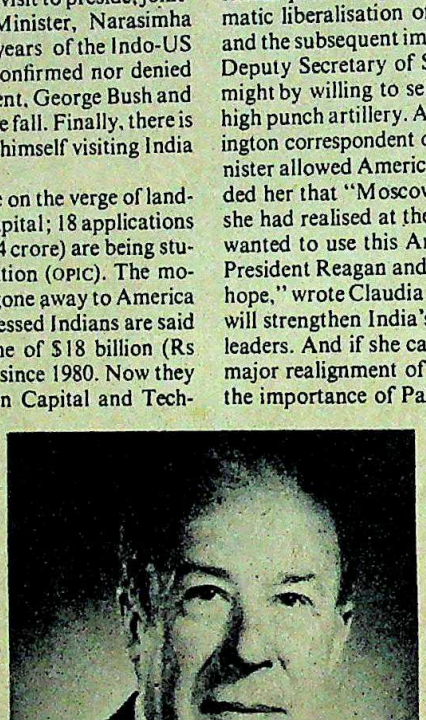
INDO-US RELATIONS

The Americans Are Comin

IS 1983 GOING to be India's American Year? Three officials of the State Department of the rank of junior ministers have been in Delhi since January. In the next few days, the Secretary of State, George Shultz, is arriving on a two-day visit to preside, jointly with the Indian Foreign Minister, Narasimha Rao, at the first session in four years of the Indo-US joint commission. There are reports, neither confirmed nor denied by South Block, of visits by the US Vice-President, George Bush and the Defence Secretary, Caspar Weinberger in the fall. Finally, there is even a possibility of President Ronald Reagan himself visiting India before the year is out.

Twenty eight American firms are said to be on the verge of landing in India with large portfolios of investible capital; 18 applications involving an investment of $144 million (Rs 144 crore) are being studied by the US Overseas Investment Corporation (OPIC). The motherland is also waiting for her sons who have gone away to America to help in her economic development. These blessed Indians are said to have accumulated bank savings to the tune of $18 billion (Rs 18,000 crore). L.K. Jha has been wooing them since 1980. Now they have formed a collective—the Indo-American Capital and Technology Corporation (ICAT)—along with a group of 10 banks to transfer technology to India. The last but by no means the least: several American corporations have received clearance by the Reagan Administration to sell up to $1 billion (Rs 1,000 crore) worth of military equipment to India. They are waiting for the prime minister's Homeric nod, which is not coming and may not come at all.

If the Shultz visit goes off well and if all the possibilities listed above become realities, it would be a remarkable transformation of a relationship that looked sickly only a year ago. A heady harvest indeed of Mrs Gandhi's American tour of July last year in quest of understanding. Why, then, is she not happy with the rich fruits delivered by her own diplomatic initiative? Why, then, does she point an accusing finger again and again at an unnamed great power that everybody identifies as the United States and blame it for trying to weaken, destabilise and even Balkanise India, and to hurt her personally because she wants to make India united and strong? Is she alarmed by the success of her own diplomatic labour?



Shultz: crucial visit

Building Friendship: Friendship between nations can be compared to a building which, as Goethe said, needs three things: "That it stands on the right spot; that it is securely founded; that it is successfully executed." Do these three basic qualities inform the Indo-US relationship of the last one year? All theories of international politics are grey and few trees of international friendships today are exactly green. It is also possible to stretch the building metaphor a bit to bring out the irony that inheres human accomplishments. For it was Goethe himself who wrote: "The fate of the architect is the strangest of all. How often he expends his whole soul, his heart and passion to produce buildings into which he himself may never enter."

Could it be that Mrs Gandhi did not really intend to build an India-America friendship house but was obliged to seek an understanding with the Reagan Administration because she was under nancial duress? Has she been smarting under the high price she had to pay—unpopular budget retrenchments, higher prices, h taxation and the closure of her political options on the left Indian political spectrum? Americans were so impressed by the matic liberalisation of terms of investment in the Indian econ and the subsequent improvement in India's balance of payments Deputy Secretary of State, Walter Stoessel, suggested that th might by willing to sell to India F-16 planes, C-130 transport high punch artillery. According to Claudia Wright, perceptive W ington correspondent of the *New Statesman* of London, the prim nister allowed Americans to harbour the belief that they had pe ded her that "Moscow is more of a threat to the subcontinent she had realised at the outset of the Afghanistan intervention wanted to use this American belief to coax concessions from President Reagan and the late Leonid Brezhnev. "It is Mrs Gand hope," wrote Claudia Wright, "that, through this dual courtsh will strengthen India's value in the calculations of both super leaders. And if she can do that, she thinks she will have achie major realignment of US policy towards India, inevitably re the importance of Pakistan in Washington's strategic scheme the threat that it poses to India's secu

There's little doubt that India's tions with the superpowers, indeed the thrust of its foreign policy, is deter primarily in the crucible of relations wi kistan, and, secondarily, by the dema economic and social development. I mid-'80s, a third dimension has been to the basic sources of India's external tions, especially with the superpowers the demand of India's electoral politics the next parliamentary election on the cal horizon, the prime minister has be see India seriously threatened by Pak and the US. In the last few months, suspicions about Pakistan's "real i ions" have been studiously revived. process of improvement in political-st relations with Pakistan has been down, if not halted. Clouds have been in to eclipse the importance of the in session of the newly-created India-Pa joint commission, the sturdy child b the two neighbours' now muted quest for a relationship b a committed non-use of force.

Perhaps the prime minister is disappointed because the Administration has shown the desire to shift the focus of its Asia policy from Pakistan to India. Some people close to the House have sometimes spoken of America using its "India against the Soviet Union, and the President himself has be trayed as a man suddenly awakened to the importance of In virtue of its size, population, level of development and, above chairmanship of the Non-aligned Movement.

No Strategy: Sources close to the prime minister point ou ever, that Reagan has so far given no evidence of new s thinking on India or South Asia. As officials in South Bloc over the pluses and minuses of the bilateral Indo-US relations year after Mrs Gandhi's Washington visit (which even the

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scribed as "highly successful" in July 1982), creases form on foreheads. A two-way trade of $24 billion (Rs 24,000 crore) in ...ll, yes, but heavily unbalanced in favour of the US because ...ows much more from America than she can sell to it. Quota ...ions. American investment is still well below $1 billion (Rs ...crore), a mere 0.3 per cent of total US investments abroad. As ...s 386 collaborations have been approved since 1982, but in ...capital and hi-tech, nothing spectacular. There has been a re-...supply spare parts for Tarapur, and continued efforts have ...ade to block the flow of credits to India from international ...l institutions. Direct US aid to India is reduced to a pittance: ...$86 million (Rs 86 crore) in the 1984 budget compared to ...illion (Rs 76 crore) for Bangladesh.

...here is a big gap between what Indians expected to get from ...ca and what they have obtained so far, it only shows how ...t is in the world of the ...change entrenched pat-...of political alignments ...global and regional le-...tween the optimistic and ...ssimistic views of the ...S relationship, there is a ...hat may be called realistic, ...takes into account what ...le and what is not. This ...view taken by the man ...has probably worked ...than anyone else to ...the broken relationship: ...Barnes, US ambassador ...Barnes, in a 90-minute ...ew trod the terrain of In-...relationship with extre-...tion. "Compared to the ...on obtaining one-and-a-...ars ago, both countries ...ow investing time and ...in building a cooperative ...ship," he affirmed. ...no hostility now, there ...sire to understand each ...positions, live with diffe-...that cannot be resolved ...ncentrate on areas where ...ests and interests of the ...et and mingle."

...rnes, who is the first ...iplomat to be appointed ...assador to India, and ...orte is the classical style ...diplomacy, emphasised that on many issues the US and India ...ntrite views that refused to mesh. "The US interests in Central ...a are entirely different from India's interests in that region." ...re are issues—"peace in the Middle East, for example" on ...the two countries might find areas of working together. He ...ve that only on a relatively small number of world issues did ...ia's two largest democracies have shared perspectives. On no ...than 17.2 per cent of issues at the UN have India and America ...together, compared to 26.8 per cent in the case of Pakistan and ...per cent in the case of China.

...dia wasn't strategically very important in the US scheme of ...affairs, conceded Barnes, but hastened to add that "India is ...ant for its own reasons and also because it is the formal leader ...-aligned Movement". India and the US would continue to ...a fairly large number of issues, he said, pointing out, by way of illustration, the role of multilateral financial institutions, critical flashpoints like Kampuchea and Afghanistan, nuclear arms control and disarmament. "But even on some of these issues our governments agree that solutions should be sought through negotiations and not by military means. The question is whether we can separate areas of disagreement and build on areas of agreement which are by no means small."

New Thinking: Did the Reagan Administration have a regional policy for the strategically interlinked areas of South-west and South Asia, in which India had a place commensurate with its resources and status? "We would accept and work with any regional arrangements agreed to by the regional countries concerned," replied Barnes. The US supported the efforts of India and Pakistan to normalise relations, he pointed out. Barnes said that the US Government encouraged the UN endeavour to bring about a political settlement of the Afghan crisis. Washington had definite views of the basic requirements of a political solution, but he emphatically denied that it was putting pressure on Pakistan to adopt a hard line. Nor was the US coordinating its policy with that of China. He did not see that the Soviet Union had "great relevance" to friendly cooperation between the US and India. In other words, Barnes suggested that Indo-US relations could grow outside the boundaries of the superpower cold war.

Mrs Gandhi and President Reagan in Washington: coming closer

He sympathised with the Indian effort to get foreign credits at the cheapest interest rates available. It was also entirely up to India to determine its economic policies. His own view, however, was that Indian economy needed to transit from a domestic-market centered perspective to a world market oriented one. He saw considerable potentials of American investment in India. "But India must do its own promotional work and back this up with attractive opportunities." After all, 110 countries are wooing American capital, technology and know-how.

The American ambassador observed that long-term perspectives of Indo-American relations "look good". Only the present and the immediate future are mined with problems. He said he was perturbed by the prime minister's oblique charge that the US is undermining India's unity and strength. "I don't think she means it. Still, to the extent her pronouncements influence public opinion, I am perturbed. If she has any reason to complain, she should tell me."

Mrs Gandhi won't, because what she says about external threat to India's unity and strength are her first shots in the coming electoral hustings. She may very well launch her party's election campaign with the slogan: India's Unity in Danger, identifying the US and Pakistan as the powers from where the big threat comes to India's hard-earned national integrity and economic success. That kind of an election campaign may knock out the fragile foundations of the fledgling, one-year-old Indo-US undertanding.

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DEATH PENALTY

Hanging Fire

THE QUALITY of justice seemed to be under tremendous strain last fortnight. At issue was the vexatious question of capital punishment. As usual, the shock waves emanated from an indecisive Supreme Court. In November 1981, the court had stayed executions all over the country after it was contended in the case of Kuljit Singh (alias Ranga) that the President's mercy powers under Article 72 of the Constitution were justiciable—only to vacate the stay 10 weeks later, saying it would examine the question when a more appropriate occasion arose.

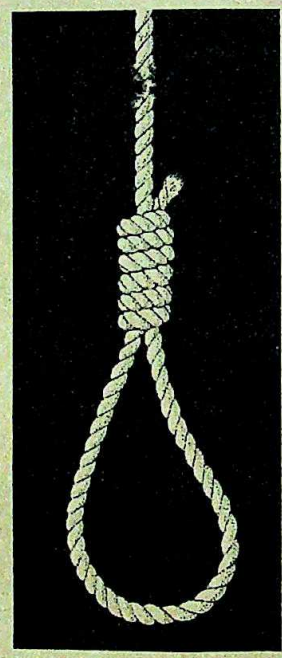
This time the court grappled with the specific method of meting out justice to a killer under sentence of death. On May 6, Chief Justice Y.V. Chandrachud and Justices E.S. Venkataramiah and Sabyasachi Mukherjee stayed Deendayal's execution after his lawyers contended that death by hanging, the procedure laid down by Section 354(5) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) was cruel and unconstitutional. Over the following week, the court halted the executions of 12 more convicts—also on the question of hanging.

Predictably, the stay orders stirred protests against what was seen as clemency towards the sentenced killers. Snatched just 24 hours before the hangman's noose was to fall over their necks were Kartar Singh and Ujagar Singh, awaiting death in Delhi's Tihar Jail for Vidya Jain's murder in 1973, and Rajendra Jakkal, Munawar Shah, Dilip Sutar and Shantaram Jagtap, killers of 10 Pune citizens in 1976, who won a new lease of life barely 48 hours before their scheduled executions in Pune's Yerawada Jail.

Stayed Executions: The latest series of convulsions over the death sentence began on February 17, when Justices O. Chinnappa Reddy and R.B. Misra ruled on an appeal by sentenced Tamil Nadu convict T.V. Vaitheeswaran that if delay in the execution of death penalty exceeded two years, the sentence was liable to be commuted to one of life imprisonment. In March last year, a three-judge bench of the court had rejected Vaitheeswaran's mercy plea, but 11 months later it suddenly seemed to notice that Vaitheeswaran had been awaiting death since January 1975.

Five weeks later a three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Chandrachud reversed the ruling of Reddy and Misra when it held that no rule of thumb could be applied in automatically commuting all sentences of death that took over two years to execute. Statistics showed, said the judges, that at least four or five years elapsed between imposition of a death sentence by a sessions court and its final disposal by the Supreme Court—over and above which the Government of India took its own time in deciding mercy petitions under Articles 72 and 161 of the Constitution—a process beset by bureaucracy and indifference.

Similarly, in the case of Ujagar Singh and Kartar Singh, the Supreme Court had rejected their mercy plea in February last year, and once again on April 6 this year when it held that their clemency petition's rejection by the President was not unfair. The third time around, however, the two killers' executions were stayed by the same court over the question of hanging.



Differing Views: Essentially, the debate over the method of execution reflects the wide divergence of views within the judiciary over the constitutionality—and moral correctness—of capital punishment. In *Bachan Singh versus State of Punjab* (1980) the Supreme Court had held by a four-one majority that the death sentence was constitutional, qualifying only that it should be imposed in the "rarest of rare" cases. "But the very term 'rarest of rare' can be misinterpreted by the lower judiciary," says advocate Gobinda Mukhoty, "just as the term 'basic features of the Constitution' has left a vagueness behind it after the *Keshavananda Bharati* case."

Public sentiment has very often governed the imposition of the death penalty. In the Billa-Ranga case, the two killers were hounded from the very beginning by a revengeful public and an unsympathetic press. The halting of the Pune murderers' executions last fortnight similarly evoked strong protests throughout Maharashtra. Pune citizens and the relatives of the Joshi and Abhyankar families—who were the chief victims of Jakkal and his cohorts—sent an appeal to Chief Justice Chandrachud asking him to constitute a special bench to expedite the killers' plea for a less painful death than by hanging.

Alternatives: In contrast, surveys ducted all over the world have demonst that retention of the death penalty do necessarily act as a deterrent as far as cidence of murder is concerned. As the India stands today, in murder cases, prisonment is the rule and death penal exception. But the question plaguing diciary has been: how does a judge between the two alternatives? The dea nalty should ideally be imposed only balancing factors like deterrence, retri and the possible rehabilitation of the rer. "Social conditions today are such citizens have to resort to private jus says R.K. Garg, "but crime has a b side too. Forgiveness social remorse for cr conditions in which was committed."

Nowhere was the and arbitrary manne which even the highes of the land treats dea nalty cases more shoc evident than in the Singh case. Jeeta Kashmira Singh and bans Singh were sen to death by the Alla High Court in October for playing equal pa murdering a family o persons. Each of thes murderers appealed s tely to the Supreme C

Unequal Judg Jeeta Singh's petition w smissed by Justices drachud, Krishna Iye N.L. Untwalia on Ap 1976. Kashmira Singh tition was allowed by ces Fazal Ali and P.N. Bhagwati, April 10, 1977, his sentence was com to life imprisonment. Harbans Singh cial leave petition was dismissed by R.S. Sarkaria and P.N. Singhal on O 16, 1978; a review petition filed by also dismissed by Justices Sarkaria and Sen on May 9, 1980.

Meanwhile Jeeta Singh was execu October 6, 1981, and Harbans Singh also have been executed along with he filed a desperate writ petition. P out that Kashmira Singh had obtained mutation of sentence—and so his ca referred back to the President for re ration of his clemency petition. Be the composition of four different bens the Supreme Court, one of the three rers in the case was hanged, another ned commutation, and the third barg ped the noose—and this confusion, Jeeta Singh, occurred despite the stay

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...dence existing against all three.

THE MORAL sanction for imposing the death penalty is also tied inextricably to the social conditions in India. ...ds of poor murderers, unable to hire ...e legal aid, have been marched to ...ows, and as many murderers from the ...strata of society have escaped death ...because they could pay for expert ...elp. Dr. N.S. Jain, who conspired with ...amour Chandresh Sharma to kill his ...idya and hired Ujagar Singh and ...Singh to commit the murder, obtai... ...mmutation to life imprisonment, but ...o hired assassins now await death in ...jail. The "mitigating" factor in Jain's ...was that he was an eminent eye surgeon, ...the two killers were illiterate and poor ...merited extermination. Such discrimi... ...on social lines casts the imposition of ...ath penalty into a dubious light.

Even in regard to rehabilitation, the ...penal system has no provisions for at... ...ing to bring a lifer back from the sha... ...of crime and prison, into the role of a ...ding citizen. Thousands of prisoners ...ing life sentences throughout the ...y have been rotting in jails for inhu... ...long periods. Section 433(a) of the ...which came into effect from Decem... ...1978, stipulated that a life sentence ...have to extend over at least 14 years ...murderers convicted after that date, ...gh lifers convicted earlier could claim ...ons for good behaviour.

Even this definition of a life sentence left ...ion of a murderer's period of trial ...vagarious interpretation. On March ...year, however, a three-judge bench of ...preme Court headed by Justice P.N. ...ati ruled in the case of *Sukhlal Hansda ...ers versus State of West Bengal* that ...years' minimum could also include the ...the prisoner spent as an undertrial. In ...e, eight out of 24 prisoners appealing ...continued incarceration had already ...ver 20 years in the Midnapore Central ...d six had been in prison for over 14

...imately, the Supreme Court's discre... ...capital punishment cases is restricted ...ective. There is no guarantee that the ...courts exercise fairness and impose ...ath penalty only in the "rarest of rare" ...or can the Supreme Court order a re... ...d re-examine the evidence already ...ed by the sessions and high courts. ...the bunch of stays of executions gran... ...fortnight comes up for hearing on ...9, when the court reopens after its ...er vacation, these and other unresol... ...ions will continue to plague what is ...y a moral and ethical quandary.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

MEDICAL VIEW

Pain Killer

THE POLICE surgeon told a story. A group of people were lost at sea. One day they spotted land and on getting closer, saw a noose hanging from a tree. They dropped anchor immediately, convinced that there was law and order in that land—the noose was evidence enough.

"This debate about 'hanging a man till death' being a crude method has been whipped up by the lawyers who simply want to complicate matters—criminals have been hanged for many years now and it is the least painful of the methods," said Dr Bharat Singh, police surgeon Delhi. "These days if you want to get acquitted, you should go to the Supreme Court—they never hang anybody," he added.

His premise, as that of many other doctors, stems from the belief that the concept of law is based on fear, and if an element of that is removed, it would become toothless. "Given our social set-up and the facilities available, hanging is the best way. It certainly is not the most unscrupulous way of doing it," said Dr Bishnu Kumar, head of the Department of Forensic Medicine at New Delhi's Maulana Azad Medical College.

Bharat Singh and Chandra: critics of clemency

Ancient Method: But, that is not the issue. Debates about capital punishment have largely been intramural, and whenever there has been any public outcry, passions have ebbed and flowed as a reaction to a particular crime and issues have been confused. Not much is known about the actual process of hanging. "I do believe that justice delayed is justice denied, but hanging is really crude. We have to find a better way of doing it," said Dr S. Padmavati, an eminent cardiologist.

It is generally believed that when a man is hanged, he dies of asphyxiation. What really happens, if it is properly done, is that the cervical vertebra fractures and crushes the medulla. Situated at the upper end of the spinal cord and the lower end of the brain, the medulla is a vital organ because respiratory and circulatory centres are situated there. "The brain dies immediately and even though the heart and lungs may continue to function, the man is considered dead," said Professor Jagdish Chandra, head of the Department of Forensic Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi.

Chandra, however, conceded that death was either "instantaneous" or "rapid", thus granting currency to the belief that death is not as instantaneous as it is made out to be. Dr Kumar corroborated this when he pointed out that there were instances when death occurred after an extended period.

Before a man is hanged, he is measured and weighed because the crucial factor that will break the neck is the drop—generally between 5 ft and 8 ft, depending on the weight of the person. "Once the brain is dead, a person is considered dead, but the only sure way of ensuring brain-death is by conducting an electroencephalograph (EEG)," Padmavati said. When asked if an EEG was done before a man was pronounced dead, Singh said: "We don't do an EEG but we do carry out various tests that would indicate brain-death and within five to six minutes we are able to pronounce a man dead."

Brain Power: Critics of "the rope" allege that if the neck has not broken as it is supposed to, the man goes into deep coma and might not experience pain because the brain is not able to translate any external stimuli. Studies have also shown that the brain can tolerate five to six minutes of inactivity and still recover its functions and there is no way of finding this out without an EEG.

Electrocution, according to considered opinion, is problematic. "With power cuts every day and power shortages, where in the country do you get 20,000 volts?" asked Chandra.

Not until about 200 years ago did societies question the state's right to kill. Till then, the preoccupation was more with how to do it, and stoning, strangling, burning and crucifixion have all been in vogue at various times. Vengeance is also probably the way a society communicates to itself that justice is alive and well. But, at this point, there are far too many questions and they cannot be wished away.

—CHITRA SUBRAMANIAM

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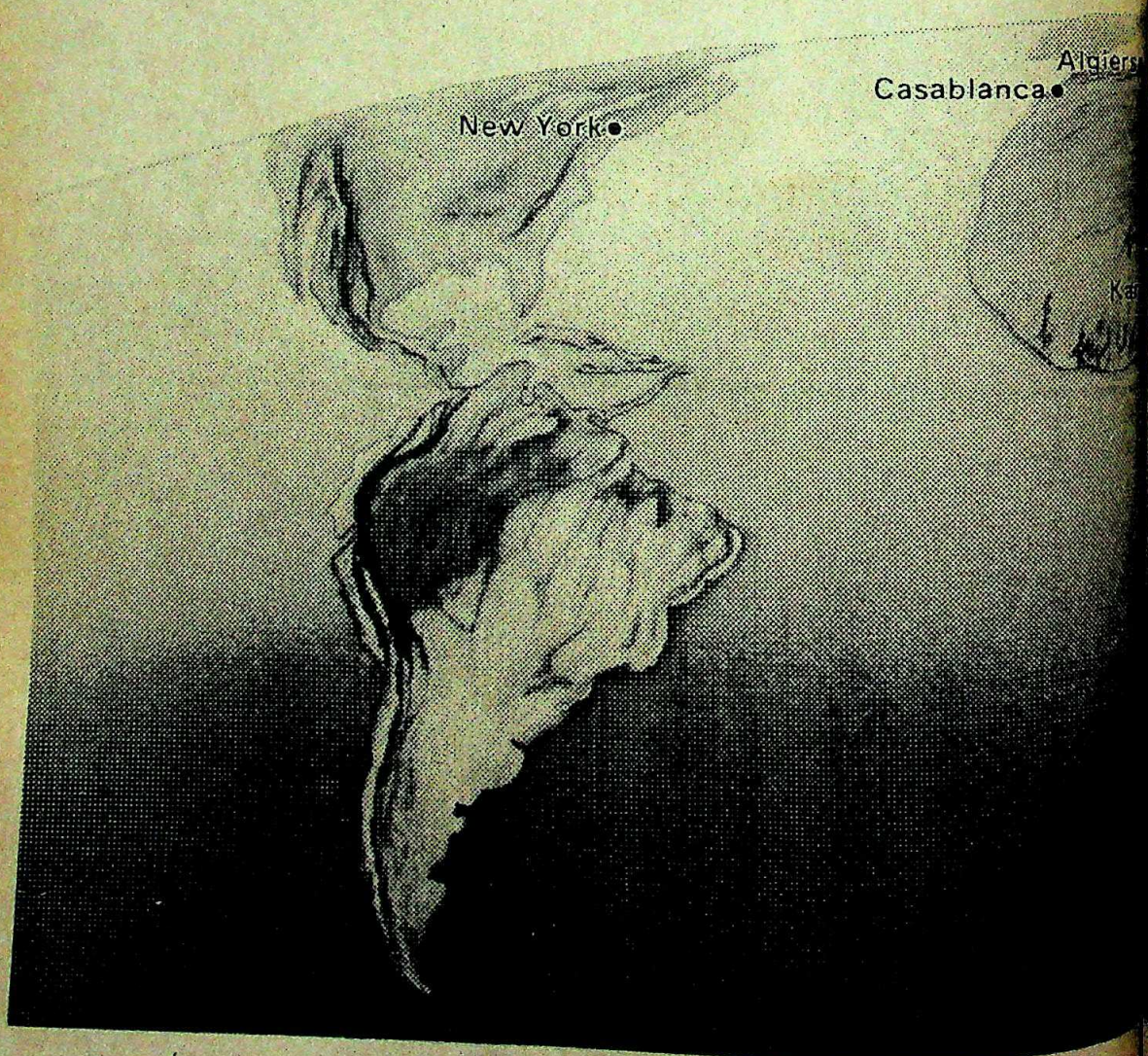

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HARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

xperiment Gone Awry

s like the aftermath of a communal The only visible presence in the ted Jawaharlal Nehru University the clusters of bored CRPF and lice personnel lounging around at points and the occasional squad reless set buzzing, winding its way round the rocky campus. A shroud of criminations, distrust and rumours ail rests uneasily over the recent vio- hich has left an indelible stain on the worsening relations between tea- nd students.

st fortnight, events following the hos- ter of a single student had led to a police lathi charge and arrest of s gheraoing the vice-chancellor, s going on rampage, the clamp- Section 144 and the courting of arrest r 350 students—all of whom stand with 17 sections of the Indian Penal While uncertainty prevails, Vice llor P.N. Srivastava feels that the ty is likely to resume functioning by

ain Reaction: The confrontation, at was an insignificant administra- e was provoked by the students. But morable chain of angry reactions it ed from both teachers and students is e of a deeper malaise which has left little room for negotiation on either side.

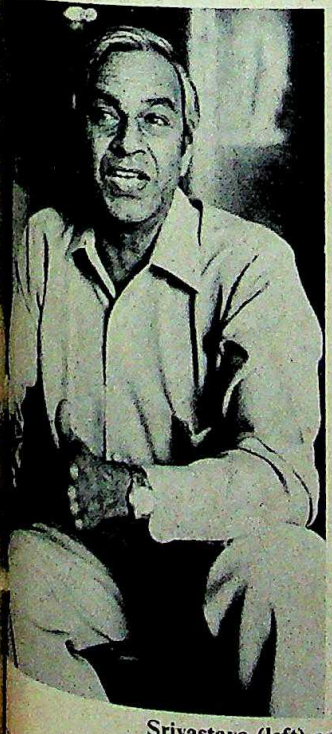
Events escalated rapidly. On April 27, Jalees Ahmed, a student of Jhelum Hostel was transferred to Ganga Hostel on disciplinary grounds; on May 3 JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) President N.R. Mohanty, another office-bearer and Ahmed broke Ahmed's room's lock; on May 4 JNU Teacher's Association's (JNUTA) threatened exam boycott; and on May 9 Srivastava issued expulsion show cause notice to the students. Student support came with retrospective effect in a general body meeting on May 7.

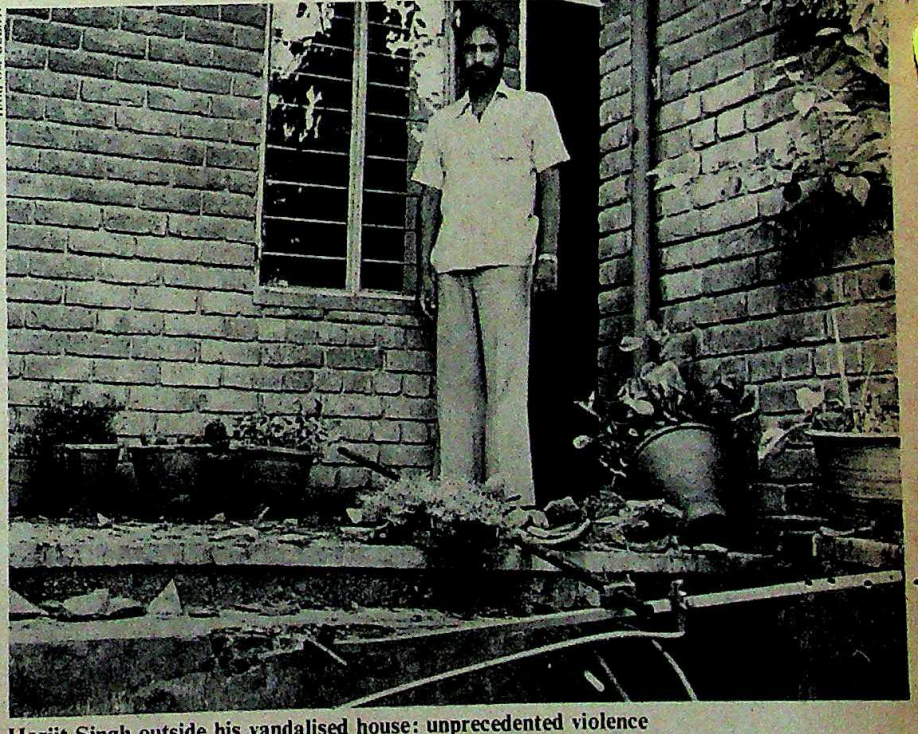
Lengthy Gherao: At 3.30 p.m. on May 9, acting on the basis of a Student Council decision, over 100 students entered the vice-chancellor's residence, snapped telephone and electricity connections and gheraoed Srivastava and Rector M.S. Agwani. The Registrar R.S. Batra who, the students apprehended, had been empowered to close the university sine die if the situation worsened, was also brought and gheraoed.

The three officials were forced to sit out a 50-hour ordeal on chairs, surrounded by students whose daily number peaked at approximately 200. Refusing to eat under these humiliating conditions, they ate only one meal. Despite signs of dehydration and high blood pressure, a doctor who came to attend on them was insulted.

On May 10, Srivastava offered what were, in the circumstances, three eminently reasonable proposals. The JNUSU was asked to either express regret for the incidents from April 27 to May 2; or restore status quo ante to April 27 and the administration would simultaneously withdraw all actions contemplated against students; or accept an inquiry by a Supreme Court or high court judge into the events from April 27 to May 10. It is symptomatic of the ineffectual leadership of Mohanty which was acutely susceptible to allegations of a "sell-out" that no agreement could be worked out until the arrival of the police at 5.45 p.m. following an entreaty by teachers' wives to Lt-Governor Jagmohan.

Widespread Violence: It is after the police lathi charged the gherao and withdrew with the three officials after seriously injuring few students and arresting 37, including some bystanders, that some agitators went berserk. The police entry and injuries to students, one of whom had his kneecap smashed, roused widespread anger and gives the lie to the vice-chancellor's statement that only some "extremists" were involved. The crowd, which had no discernible composition, vented its frustration in indiscriminate stoning of teachers' houses and cars. Specially singled out were Alam, Srivastava and the other Jhelum warden Harjit Singh. Their houses were ransacked, articles stolen, books burnt and arson attempted. Significantly, the violence was curbed by sections of the students themselves. Said Srivastava: "All





HARI OM GULATI

Srivastava (left) and Harjit Singh outside his vandalised house: unprecedented violence

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my savings of 35 years have been destroyed."

By 7 p.m. the violence had by and large come to an end except for sporadic instances which continued to erupt till 9 p.m. It was only by about 7.30 p.m. around the time the police returned, that large numbers of students—many of whom were not even present on campus earlier—assembled on Jhelum lawns. They formally broke Section 144 which had been imposed and voluntarily courted arrest in protest against police action on campus.

Blanket Charges: Despite the sequence of events, blanket charges including arson and rioting were brought against all students in police custody. Matters were complicated by large-scale inpersonation by students—many of whom gave false names—and the escape of 67 of them from custody, which led to the suspension of eight warders in Tihar Central and Camp jails. Bail was, however, granted starting one week after their arrest and all have been released.

Meanwhile, JNU was closed and complete vacation of hostels was enforced. The administration's hostility towards students was epitomised by Dean of Students' Welfare Yogendra Singh who told stranded foreign students: "The administration is no longer responsible for the students. As far as I am concerned, you can sleep on the streets."

How had this serious rupture of the academic community into two power blocs come about in a university whose structure, from its inception, emphasised learning rather than teaching? JNU was organised around a system of internal assessment that involved interaction between teacher and taught.

Founded in 1968, JNU started functioning in the liberal climate of the early '70s as an unorthodox experiment in advanced education that was expected to conform to international standards and throw up radical solutions to larger social issues. Teachers were co-opted into administration to make it more personalised, on a residential campus which, even architecturally, integrated the academic community with teachers and students living side by side.

THIS 'humanised' administration was extremely sensitive to both positive and negative pressures from student political groups because equally active involvement of teacher-administrators was lacking. In the early years of expanding financial outlays and a student population that was a third of its present strength of 3,300, this system could accommodate late payment of fees by genuinely impoverished students who would not have survived a more bureaucratised structure.

However, with the expansion of JNU, this was exploited by a large number of students to simply avoid paying. By a recent estimate, mess arrears run into lakhs of rupees including Rs 8.5 lakh owed to Super Bazar in January 1983. Agitational pressure led to more students being accommodated in hostels—two and three per room—even in the absence of fresh constructions. Student expectations generated by administrative laxity even disrupted academic schedules. Says Dr Satish Saberwal, who was provost between June and October 1979 and resigned in protest against this state of affairs: "There is no relationship between existing practices and the original rules which have long given way to convention. The high turnover of vice-chancellors unwilling to take a firm stand has aggravated the problem."

Deepening Crisis: On the one hand, widespread administrative corruption and inefficiency stored up student resentment against university authorities. On the other hand, with the crisis deepening, teachers increasingly relinquished their "democratic intentions" in favour of disciplinary actions which were opposed by students as "authoritarian". Any attempts towards a mutually acceptable resolution of problems were severely hampered by the widespread apathy surrounding JNUTA, one indication of which was its November 1982 election in which most nominees were elected unopposed. In crisis situations petty factionalism divides its ranks. Despite its current hard line—which brought uninvolved students, who felt this was a "blackmail of the entire student community", into the agitation—Harjit Singh's FIR charges three teachers with instigating students right up to the

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Students preparing to vacate their room: chronic malaise

Even among student parties, in to preserve their leadership over an e ing electorate has meant that no beneath considerations of populist solidarity. Strident demands have the space for negotiations at the onset struggle and adversely affected resolu students' genuine grievances. The political tactic of gherao is increasing coming the first resort, without being pered by an assessment of the limited ing power of students in terms of uni norms. It is this tendency which has spa the concepts of "student sovereignty the "supreme mandate of the general which are inimical to the democratic tioning of any institution.

Clearly, JNU is finally in the grip nation-wide crisis of educational tions. Even though allegations of its rential financial grants are wrong—per capita plan grant of Rs 3,589.11 than that of a state university like which gets Rs 4,492.75—it could not re research-oriented asylum of academia sheer expansion of numbers in the face creasing competition and limited job tunities have led to the virtual collapse personalised teaching and administ structures. The system of internal assess which promoted year-round study by ginalising examinations is under attack students. Challenges to teachers evalu are leading to strikes and closure February this year.

This general trend has been pa influenced by the radical change in students composition in the last de Current estimates put the beneficiary admission points introduced in 197 economic deprivation, Sched Caste/Scheduled Tribes, and regional wardness at roughly 50 to 60 per cent total student population. Of these, the omic category has been the most abu simple forgeries of tehsildar certifica the simple logic of electoral politics, had some impact on both issues and of student struggles especially in the of widespread political apathy.

There has been an unprecedented gence of regional and caste associatio those of Andhra students, Oriya st and the SC/ST Struggling Stu Association. For the first time in history, protests by girls against harass are being criticised as an "attack on Bh

It is clear that the process of putti back on its feet is going to be accom through an administrative hard line. T this is justifiable in relation to JNU mulated problems it incarnates the d consensus management that was the intention.

—JUGNU RAMA

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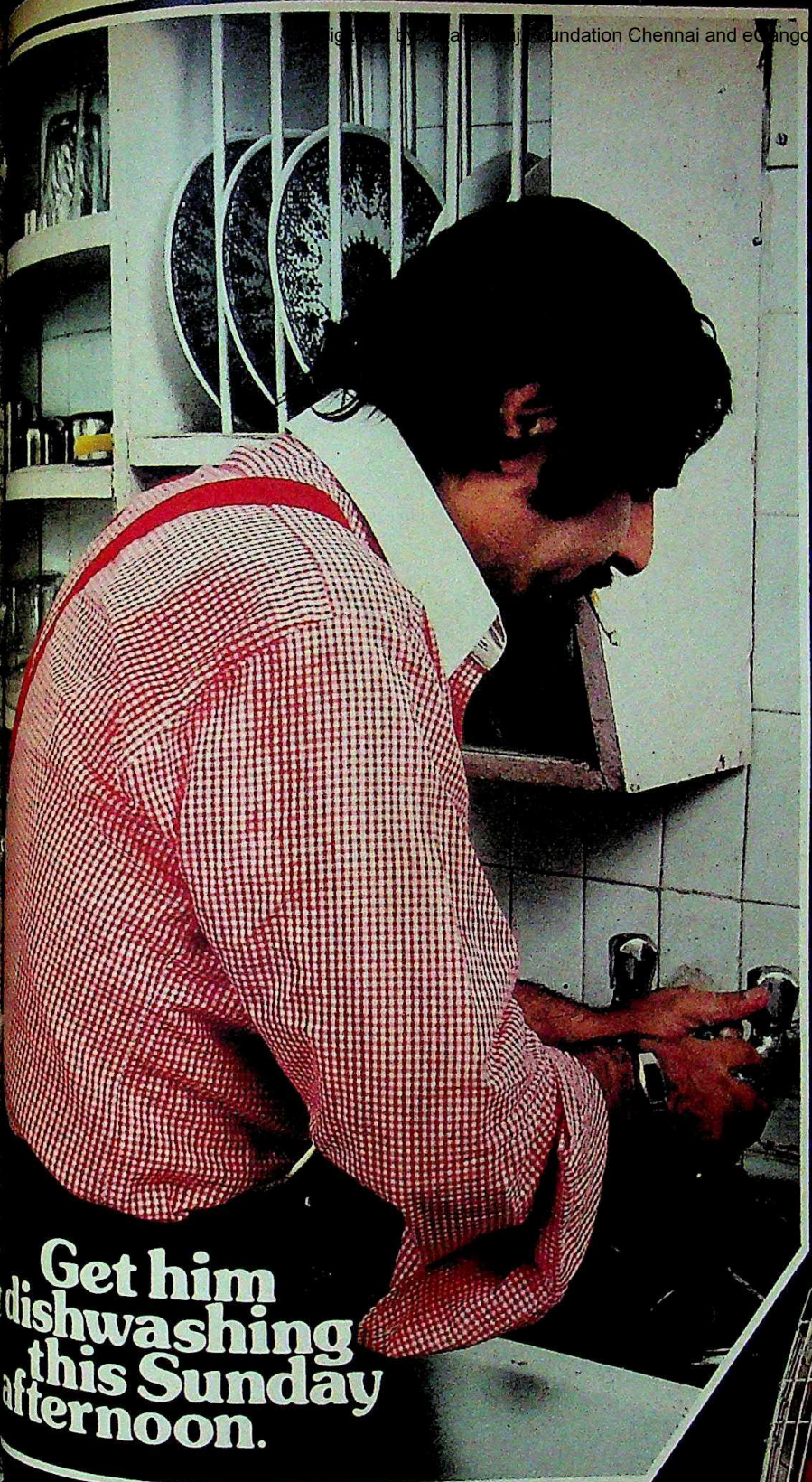

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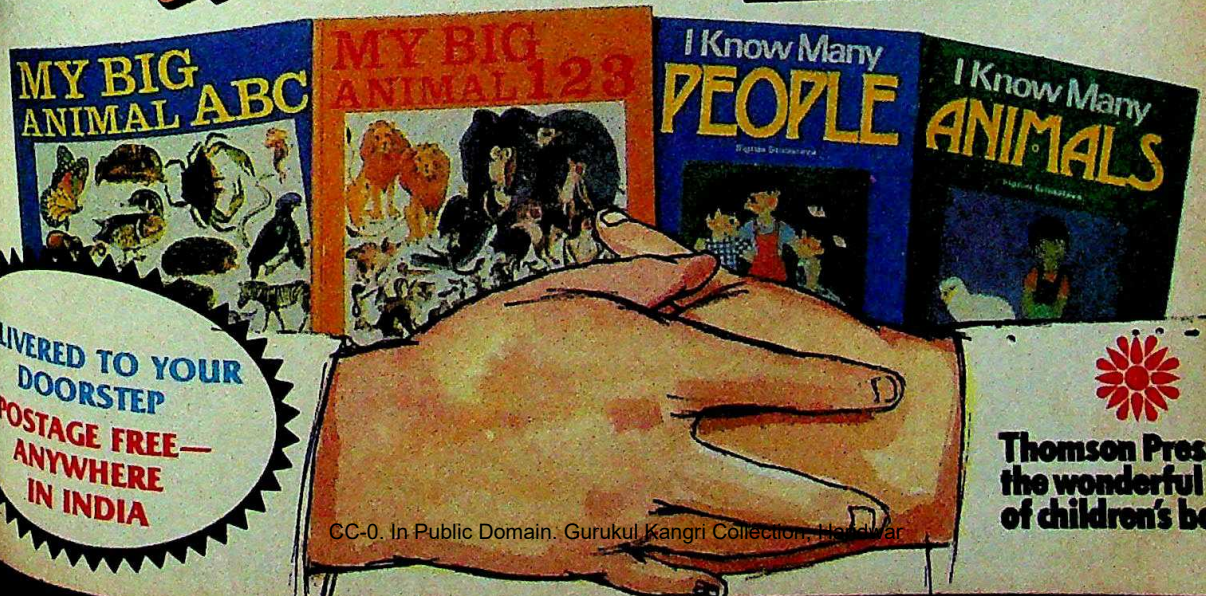

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The Paper Chase

CALICUT, Kerala's northern port city and the traditional gateway to the Malabar, is due to become centre-stage for a battle royal among three giants of the Malayalam press. *Kerala Kaumudi*, the aggressive young challenger, is preparing to storm the traditional bastion of *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* with its latest weapon. Priced at 60 paise, a five paise hike over the other two. The paper confidently expects a circulation of one lakh within a year with an initial print order of 50,000 copies. Already distinguished by seven dailies, the latest number published in the state, Calicut will now be the first city to play host to three media heavyweights when *Kaumudi* makes its scheduled debut on June 1. No other paper in the past dared muscle into the territory of the big two: with *Manorama*'s circulation of 1,70,000 followed closely by *Mathrubhumi* (1,60,000), both had begun to feel threatened in their own city of Calicut. However, *Kerala Kaumudi*, launched from Trivandrum, also has an impressive record. It is the largest single-edition Malayalam paper (circulation: 1,75,000) and the 19th largest in India with a turnover of Rs 24 crore annually. Says an exuberant M. Madhusoodanan, 39, editor and managing director of the paper: "Our Calicut edition will use the most modern printing technology in India, which will enable us to be the number one paper in the Malabar within two years."

Kaumudi will hit the stands on June 1, but work on the new edition really began two years ago. In 1980, *Mathrubhumi* broke *Manorama*'s monopoly in Trivandrum with its Calicut edition, and it seemed possible that a similar drop in circulation might ensue if *Manorama* also decided to make a foray. Rising bravely to the new challenge, *Kaumudi* backers decided to move into Calicut, relying for success on the strong support it commands amongst the backward class of Ezhavas; the other two papers identify with the upper castes.

Caste Base: Following a survey conducted in the region, which reinforced the idea of Ezhava support for the new entrant, Madhusoodanan concluded that the Malabar was ripe for a "more aggressive brand of journalism". Says M.S. Mani, former editor and member of the *Kerala Kaumudi* family: "We are going to click in Calicut because *Mathrubhumi* and *Manorama* do not have the guts to take up issues on behalf of the backward classes."

The Calicut titans, however, treat the lofty claims of *Kaumudi* with polite scepticism. Says Monu Nalapat, one of *Mathrubhumi*'s directors: "*Kerala Kaumudi* is trying to inject communalism in the Malabar. But this will not work, as the Malabar Ezhavas hate to be identified as backward classes ... *Mathrubhumi* has been in Calicut for the last 70 years, and will always remain unrivalled." Similarly, *Manorama*'s Resident Editor, Jacob Mathew, says that the *Kaumudi*'s aggressive championing of the backward classes will not affect his paper as "*Manorama* has always given a fair coverage to all sections of the people in the Malabar, and will continue to do so".

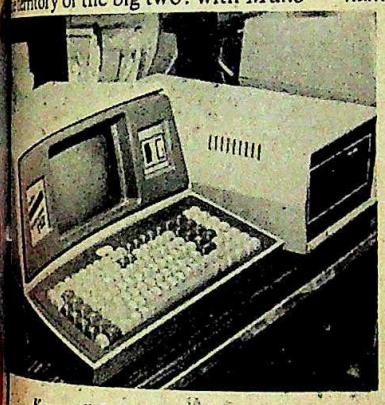
Kaumudi plans to use the latest in printing technology for its Calicut edition, and sure enough, the apprehensive *Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* have already gone offset in anticipation of the new danger. *Kaumudi* will usher in a new era in Malayalam journalism with its innovative introduction of Malayalam photo typesetting. Another first will be the installation of the "transmission link," a process by which composed matter can be sent column by column between two transmission points, thus enabling the resident editor to choose matter of local importance in his edition. This is an improvement on the "facsimile transmission method" employed by *The Hindu*, which results in a rigid similarity between all editions of the paper.

Technological Revolution: A third high technology gadget that will distinguish *Kaumudi* is the 'telephoto', by which, according to Madhusoodanan, any major event occurring anywhere in the world could be "splashed within a few hours in Calicut by our paper". And the paper will be printed by the fastest and latest web offset presses in south India. Ninety hand-picked young post-graduates have been set to work, first training on electronic typewriter terminals instead of pen and paper.

However impressive all this might sound, veteran mediamen are not easily impressed. Says P.V. Chandran of *Mathrubhumi*: "Their entire machinery is imported, and if a breakdown ever occurs, technicians will have to be flown down from Germany or Switzerland. As it is, the project is being delayed due to frequent breakdowns." Conceding that there are some teething troubles, Madhusoodanan explains: "We are training locals to handle these sophisticated machines now." But the acquisition of the hi-tech machinery is a clever move. As Madhusoodanan points out, although *Kaumudi* spent Rs 2 crore on its new unit, the other papers will have to spend at least five times that amount today for similar improvements.

With an astute marketing sense, *Kaumudi* has announced that though its Calicut edition is priced five paise higher than its competitors, subscribers will receive free copies of *Katha*, their monthly serialised magazine, which is priced at Rs 1.50. Optimistic long range plans of the paper's backers include an exclusive Gulf edition to be air-lifted every day, and yet another edition to be produced from Cochin. With the deadline drawing close, it looks like Calicut's media circles are all set for a torrid June.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI in Calicut



Kaumudi Editor Madhusoodanan flanked by (left) a sub-editing terminal and a telephoto transmitter: hi-tech thrust

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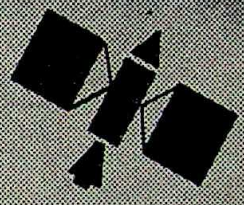

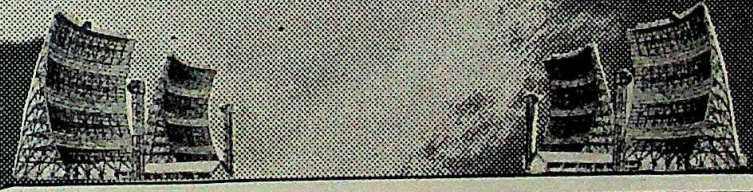

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A recent issue of *O Heraldo*: victim of the inevitable

GOA

Adeus O Heraldo

AT NO time has its circulation crossed the four-figure mark and its sole claim to fame was being the only Portuguese daily in Asia. Yet, last fortnight, when it was announced that the Goa daily *O Heraldo* (circulation: 2,000) was shutting down, there were signs of mourning all over the Union territory. "It's a disgrace that the only Portuguese daily in the country should fold up when interest in the Portuguese language is increasing the world over," lamented Dr Carmo Azavedo, its current editor.

The reaction from its regular readers was less emotional but equally sorrowful. "I will feel something missing in life," admits Monte de Silva, a retired bureaucrat. One other person who will keenly feel the loss is regular reader Vaikunthrao Dempo, the prominent Goan industrialist.

Fate Sealed: The regret, however, is tinged with the acceptance of the inevitable. The closure of the paper, after over 80 years of existence, comes as no great surprise. Its fate was really sealed after the liberation of the former Portuguese colony in 1961, when the Goans, particularly the dominant Catholic community, switched relatively easily to English. There was only a hard core of village matrons in Salcete, south of the Zuari river, who stubbornly continued to communicate in Portuguese. For them *O Heraldo* was as much a part of their lives as Goa's palm-fringed beaches or its potent feni.

The paper's closure was further accelerated by the tight-fisted policies of its owner, millionaire J.D. Fernandes. Fernandes acquired the paper more by chance than design, the previous owner having sold him the daily in return for the cancellation of a Rs 14,000 bill. Fernandes refused to spend money on the paper. In fact, his sources of material were more or less free. He declined the offer of the United News of India even though it offered him service at rock-bottom rates.

Radio News: Instead, he ordered his part-time sub-editors to make periodic visits to the wire service teleprinters installed at the government information department and copy down items of interest. These would be published in Portuguese without any credit lines. To cut down further on expenses, the paper depended largely on news picked up from radio broadcasts, mainly by the Voice of America (VOA), the BBC and Radio Lisbon. Its columnists were those who were not expected to demand any monetary compensation for their creative labour.

The result was that the paper was long on content and woefully short on news. And even the news was hardly of the earth-shaking variety and largely reflected the radio programmes. "President Reagan's welcome speech for Begin will get banner headlines because VOA treated it that way but a local football match in Panaji would be totally ignored," complained Dr Adolfe Fernandes, a regular reader of the paper for the last 20 years.

Treatment of news was not the only unique feature of the paper. There were no home deliveries and subscribers received copies by post. Like a good Catholic, it shut on Sundays, feast days and other Christian holidays. Now that it has decided to take a permanent Sabbath holiday, it denotes the snapping of the final link between Portugal and its former colony.

—CHINU PANCHAL

CRICKET

Warming U

FEW SPORTING events can ma sustained excitement of limited cricket. The pressure of scoring as runs as possible sets the stage for cricke nail-biting best. The stage is now set days of limited overs spectacle in Engl June: the Prudential World Cricket Tournament where teams will compe series of matches—double-leg m where each team plays another twice the top two meet in the final at Lords fortnight, the Indian World Cup ca began when the 14-man squad announced—amidst controversy, wit national selector, Pankaj Roy, absent the selection meeting and the surpri clusion of medium-pacer Sunil Valso

Roy said that he had not been info about the meeting and thus only fou

Srikkanth (left) and Patil: hard hi

tors chose the team. However, few w fault them for the final line-up, which by the battle-hardened Kapil Dev, has Gavaskar and Mohinder Amarnath equally battle-hardened sheet-anchors sts of free-scoring stroke-players Srikkanth and Sandeep Patil and disp surfeit of medium-pacers—so crucial limited overs game—in Madan Lal, Sandhu, Roger Binny, and Valson. The spinner is Ravi Shastri, although he bably got the nod more for his gritty than for any forlorn hope that his slow armers might skittle out opposing side

Surprise Choice: Valson, in fact, only question mark in the side. The me pacer has not been among the wicket cently, and there were murmurs that selectors should have given someone else chance, like Raju Kulkarni, who had such a stellar role when Bombay de Delhi in the semi-finals of the Ranji championship. However, medium-p are the need of the hour.

The hard-hitting Patil is back missing the West Indies tour for rea more personal than cricketing. Srikk return, too, was expected, as was Binny and Kirti Azad. Binny and A

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...ers who can be expected to shore up ...e of the Indian batting; as a bonus, ...also open the innings. The selectors ...have scotched rumours that Gavaskar ...was "rested" after his lean tour of the ...; but every team needs a depend... ...-anchor and moreover, memories ...fresh of the superb innings that ...played to enable India to record ...ever victory over the West Indies in ...cricket. All in all, Kapil Dev's boys ...balanced lot; asked about India's ...like ebullient captain said, "We are ...try very hard and are capable of a ...or two."

...prises, however, would have to be ...r India are grouped with the West ...Australia and Zimbabwe. In the last ...naments, India had failed to qualify ...semi-finals and in 1981 had lost to Sri ...What is more, the West Indies are ...for their third trophy and will go flat ...get it. They and the Australians are ...vourites to go into the semi-finals ...this group. The other group is equally ...runners-up England, Pakistan, New ...and an unexpectedly strong Sri ...are competing for the honours.

...til: hard hitting ... (left) and Binny: all-round ability

Pakistani Challenge: England, of cou... ...the advantage of playing on their ...grounds; against this are their inept ...against Australia and New Zealand ...series of one-day matches. Sri Lanka ...be taken seriously after their shock ...over Australia in a recent one-day ...But the real challenge will come from ...who have been forged into a razor-... combination by Imran Khan. ...Imran appears to have fitness ...problems. If he pulls out, it will be a big ...to Pakistan and to the tournament. To ...Pakistan's problems, Sarfraz Nawaz ...the anti-establishment warpath again. ...fair guess would be that the West ...Pakistan, England and Australia fi... ...the last four. The bookmakers have ...the West Indies as favourites: if they ...a hat trick then it would indeed be a ...crown for them and their captain ...Lloyd, who has played pivotal roles in ...previous tournaments. As the teams ...for the pitched battles, spectators are ...forward to a nail-biting fortnight.

...ever, few ...e-up, which ...bil Dev, has ...Amarnath ...eet-anchors, ...e-players ...til and disp... ...so crucial ...Madan Lal, ...Valson. The ...although he ...his gritty ...that his slow ...pposing side's ...on, in fact, ...de. The me... ...g the wicket ...urmurs that ...someone else ...who had ...Bombay de... ...he Ranji T... ...medium-...

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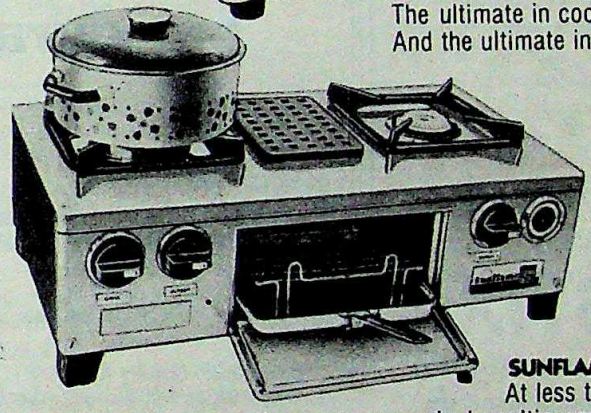

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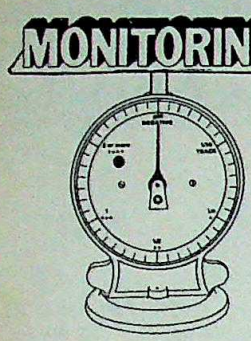

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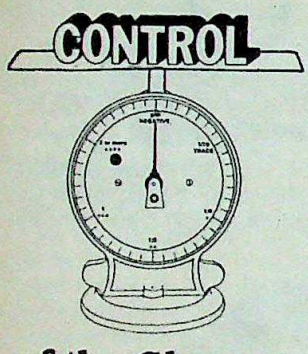

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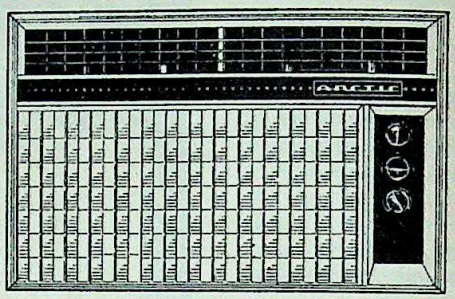

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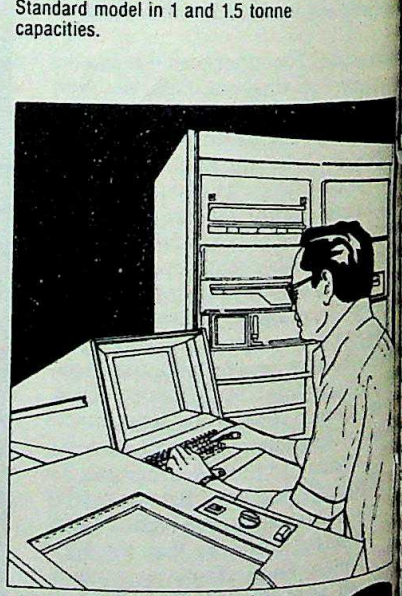

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Two of Tagore's works *Portrait At Lahore* (left) and *Storm*: Bengali heritage

ING

he Master's Price

HEN, towards the end of his eventful life, Rabindranath Tagore took to painting it was more of an from the already known forms of his an almost childlike attempt at seeing r his multifaceted talents could to the world of colour and brush. As self succinctly remarked: "Now at last work in absolute freedom; as a painter no name to lose. I have all the advantof a novice." Yet what may generally be ed as the doodlings of a novice have, the years, become major collectors' as was evident from the crowd at the ly held exhibition of his paintings at ta's Birla Academy of Art and Cul- an institution which had never before ed such a turn-out.

uch an interest was not the result of a curiosity to see how well the poet paint or draw. Today, there is a mone- value attached to his works that the poet never have dreamt of. Pradeep Roy- dhury, one of the major dealers in paintings in Calcutta and one of the realise that there was a market in his says: "A little over a year ago I sold a crayon for Rs 75,000, while four years o that all I could get for a pencil work Rs 12,000." Ironically, while an un- ot Rabindranath is fetching this astro- al price the works of Abanindranath, phew considered to be the guru of n Indian painting and whose works a niche at the Louvre, in Paris, is fet- a maximum of Rs 7,000 only, as is his disciple Nandalal Bose. Explaining this phenomenon, Victor Banerjee, art collector-cum-film personality, says: "The fact that Rabindranath's works fetch such prices, even though they are nothing much to write home about, is because he is an integral part of Bengali life." Further illustrating this strong Bengali ethos Roychowdhury relates the saga of a Bengali husband, who sold his wife's gold ornaments to acquire a painting of Tagore's from him.

What adds to the value of Tagore's works is their relative scarcity. There are reputed to be over 2,000 works to his credit of which only 150 can be accounted for outside museums. This is primarily because the poet, who took to the canvas as an aside from poetry, freely dispensed his creations among friends and relations. Indeed, given the total artistic output of Tagore, the exhibition at the Birla Academy, displayed only a fraction—about 50 paintings and sketches, gleaned mainly from the private collections of such Tagore acolytes as Maitreyee Devi, the Sarkars of *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Dilip Roy and possessions of the Academy itself.

Personal Relationships: Both the search and demand of what has truly become a collector's item is confined largely to the boundaries of West Bengal. Outside the state it is only in Gujarat, according to Roychowdhury, that a semblance of interest for the poet's work exists. This, in a large measure, is due to his relationship, through Shantiniketan with some prosperous and prominent families of Ahmedabad. In fact, on the death of his son Rathindranath, 16 of Tagore's paintings were purchased by the Sarabhais for over Rs 1 lakh.

It is amazing that given the constrained money supply in Calcutta, dealers are easily offered anything between Rs 25,000 to Rs 30,000, for works devoid of all classical norms of accepted art, but whose simply sculptured lines result, for the buyer, in the acquisition of a work with an almost mystic quality. As Tagore himself pointed out: "If, by any chance, they (his paintings) are entitled to claim recognition, it must be primarily for some rhythmic significance of form, which is ultimate and not for any interpretation of an idea or representation of a fact." It is doubtful whether Tagore's popularity stems from the reasons thought of by the poet but from the almost possessive way the patriotic Bengali feels about him. Enthused an avid collector: "If a visitor to my home recognises a Husain on my wall, I will credit him with an understanding of paintings. But if he recognises a Tagore, I will feel proud, that he has not merely recognised a painter but my cultural tradition, my very being."

In a more practical vein, unlike other painters, the collector of Tagore is assured of an original since chances of a forgery are minimal. Art experts feel it is virtually impossible for a trained artist to copy the uninitiated splendour of Tagore's works and "at some point of time the forger's discipline is bound to give him away". Certainly, it would seem that Tagore's posthumous fame as an artist is appreciably the result of regional fervour and the peculiar possessiveness that the Bengalis harbour for him —SUMANTA SEN

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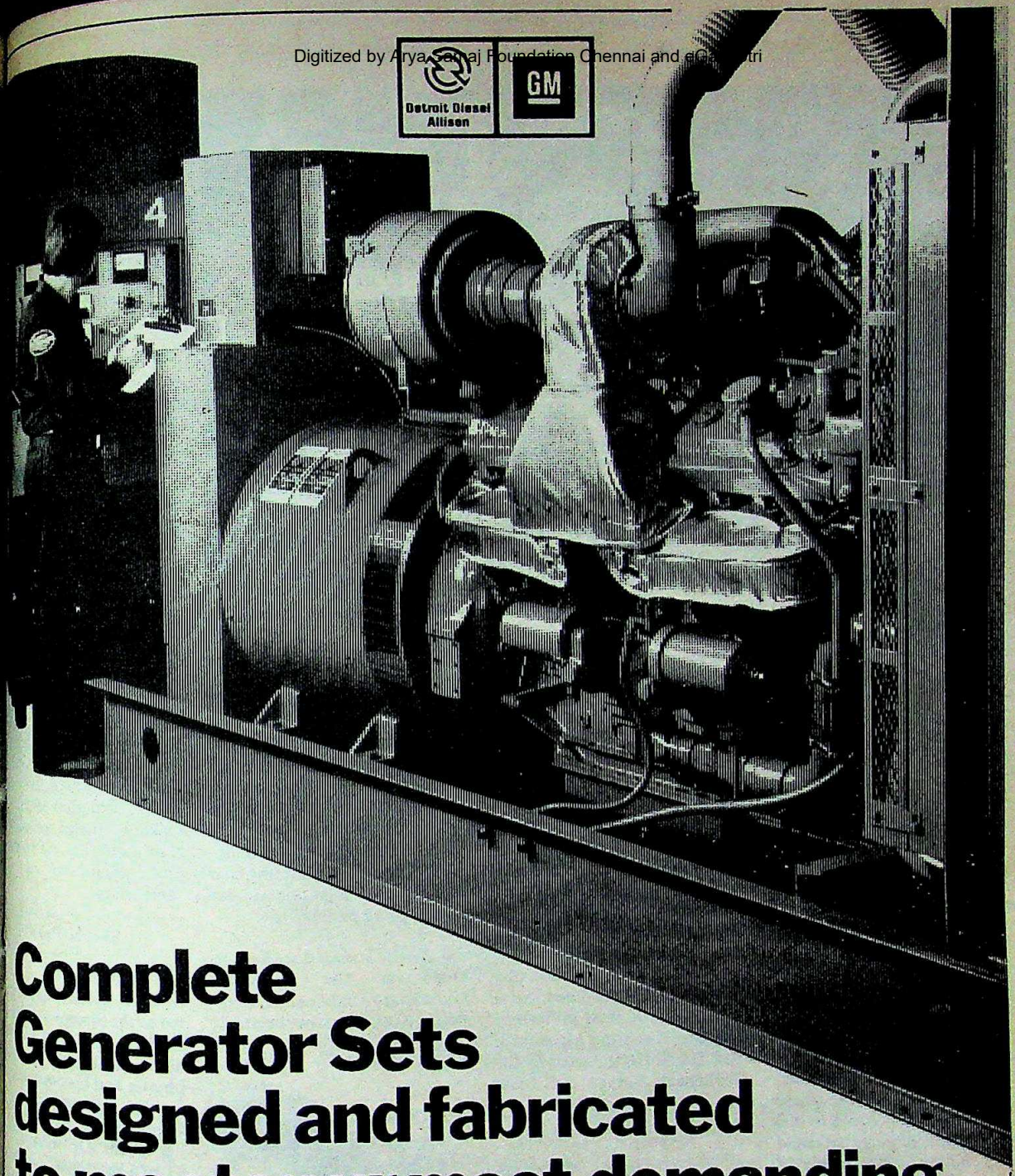

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Varughese flanked by Mendez and Burgess: best of both worlds

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Pritam: poetic defence

■ The name **Sugith Varughese** may not ring any bells in India, but it definitely does in Canada—cash register bells. Varughese, 25, a Canadian-based television scriptwriter and director, is the author and lead actor in the television serial he wrote called *The Best of Both Worlds* which is currently top-rated on Canadian TV charts. An offbeat and often hilarious story about a nervous East Indian (Varughese) who is trapped between an arranged marriage with a bride from his own community (Malika Mendez) and a liberated Canadian girl-friend (Gaye Burgess). The serial is being aired on the Canadian network, CBC, and Varughese has so far earned a cool $16,000 (Rs 1.6 lakh), a figure that could easily inflate considerably if foreign sales are organised. Born in India, the new TV star has been raised in Canada and has just got married—to a Canadian girl.

■ What is 32 ft long, 14 ft tall and eats meat? Answer: an **Allosaurus**. Despite its strange-sounding name, the Allosaurus is not some *E.T*-type cinematic creation but a prehistoric beast that roamed the earth 135 million years ago. Recently, the gigantic monster, fangs and all, was resurrected in the form of a life-size model installed on a small patch of grass in front of the Natural History Museum in New Delhi. Constructed by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) Calcutta and gifted to the museum, the Allosaurus which has cost the GSI nearly Rs 1 lakh to construct may have finally come home. Geologists have dug up teeth in Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh which they claim belong to the Allosaurus. Meanwhile, the curious crowds around the mammoth model are wondering how long this particular one will last before going extinct.

■ Poetic licence does have its limits as the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) is rather belatedly discovering. Last week, the ligious law-making body of Sikhs dispatched a stern a to the grande dame of Pu poetry, **Amrita Pritam**, reg ing their disapproval of ce poems which they said, "offensive to the religious ceptibilities of the Sikhs". the grey-haired winner of year's Jnanpith Award, the tice came as a consider shock. Which was understa able considering that the po in question were published years ago!

In fact, two of the poe *Singh* and *Kaur* are social tires and have no religious tent at all. Said the poe disgustedly: "I have a fe that the objection is from p ple who are jealous of my h ing received the Jnanp Award. Otherwise the poe have nothing objectionable them. They were written out sheer love." Enough promin Sikh scholars, writers and tellectuals have written to SGPC objecting to their obj tion. But the affair has taken toll on the frail poetess. Wi weary "I'm tired of this place need a change of scene rest", she flew off to Bulga and then to a priv sanitorium.

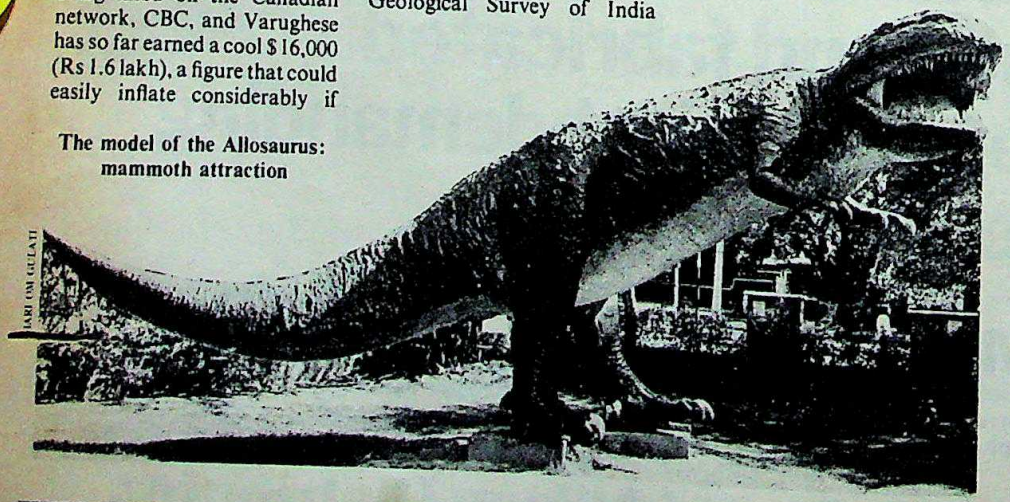
SIGN POSTS

■ **Honoured:** Profess M.G.K. Menon has been ele ted as the foreign member of USSR Academy of Sciences his contribution to mod physics and his outstanding in the organisation and d velopment of Indian science

■ **Died:** Dr Bhagat Sing 57, of a heart attack in Toron Canada, where he was underg ing treatment. Singh, a se Akali leader joined the Ak Dal in 1962 and served as cabinet minister in the Prak Singh Badal government.

■ **Died:** J.K. Somani, 66, chairman and managing di tor of the Eve's Weekly gr of publications and Vartaman Press, Bombay, the US. Somani was associ with several charitable and p anthropic institutions.

The model of the Allosaurus: mammoth attraction



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JUNE 30, 1983
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THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

पत्रिका से प्राप्त संख्या 63
प्राप्ति दिनांक 24-6-83

THE VIDEO INVASION

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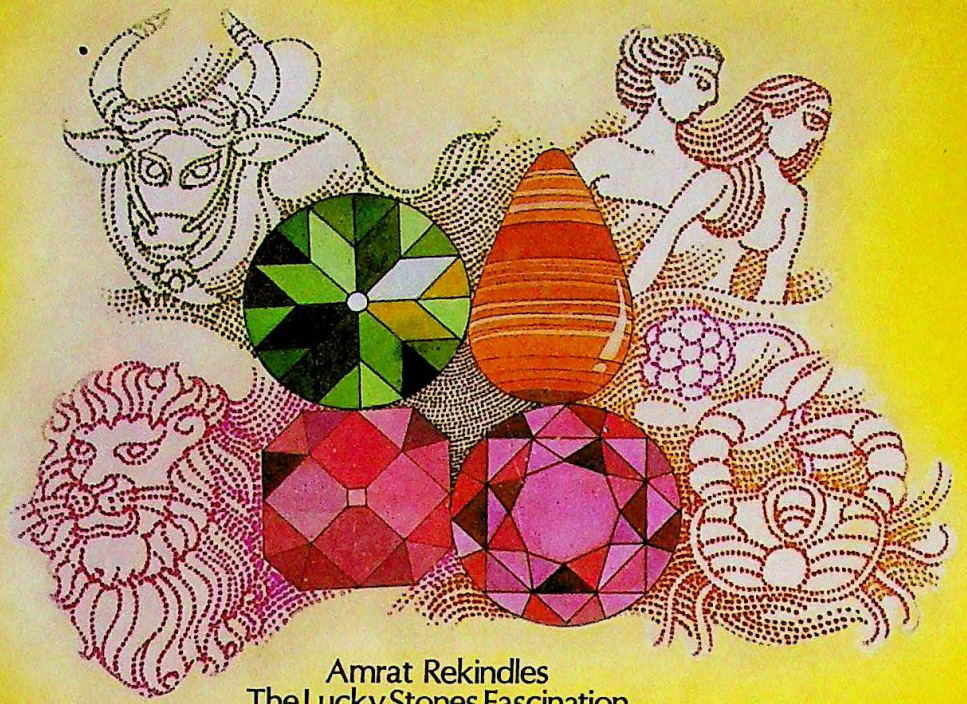

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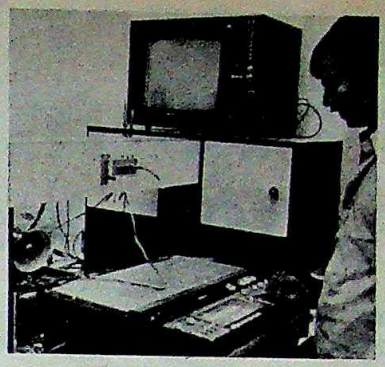
IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT



Videos

It's the biggest invasion since Coca-Cola. Fuelled by social aspirations and a relaxation of import duty, among other things, videos have invaded India with a vengeance. In homes, offices, hotels and restaurants, the flickering face of colour TVs has spawned virtually a new culture along with a profusion of video libraries and even closed-circuit TV in apartment blocks. And it's not just confined to the big cities. **Cover Story • Page 54**

Morarji Desai

Former prime minister Morarji Desai has been called many things in his long and austere life but nothing could have prepared him for the accusation made last fortnight. American journalist Seymour Hersh, in a newly released book, charged Desai with having been a paid CIA agent. The outcry was immediate and widespread and reflected the unanimous disbelief. **Special Report • Page 46**

New Films

A season of plenty lies ahead for cinema fans. Come September, a host of new and exciting films are scheduled to be released that promise to usher in a major change in the traditional commercial Hindi film formula. Made by some established and some new names in film direction, the films are both in theme and content a radical—and welcome—departure. **Cinema • Page 76**

Women

If last fortnight was any indication, the judiciary seems to have undergone radical changes in its attitude towards crime against women. In two separate judgements, the courts took a tough stand on dowry deaths by sentencing the guilty family to death and also plugged up judicial loopholes relating to cases of rape. The judgements have given a major boost to the women's movement. **Law • Page 72**

Jammu & Kashmir

In a stunning show of strength, Farooq Abdullah steamrolled to an absolute majority in last week's elections in Jammu & Kashmir. Though marred by allegations of rigging and unfair election practices, Farooq now has the mandate to chart his own course in Kashmir away from the shadow of his father. But all indications are that it will not be smooth sailing ahead. **Current Events • Page 17**

The Opposition

Under a blazing summer sun, a conclave of chief ministers and opposition leaders met in Vijayawada to hammer out a common future strategy and try and bury their differences. Though master of ceremonies, N.T. Rama Rao, the Andhra Pradesh chief minister, used the occasion to brighten his personal star, the meeting, and subsequent ones planned, sowed the seeds of 1977. **Current Events • Page 20**

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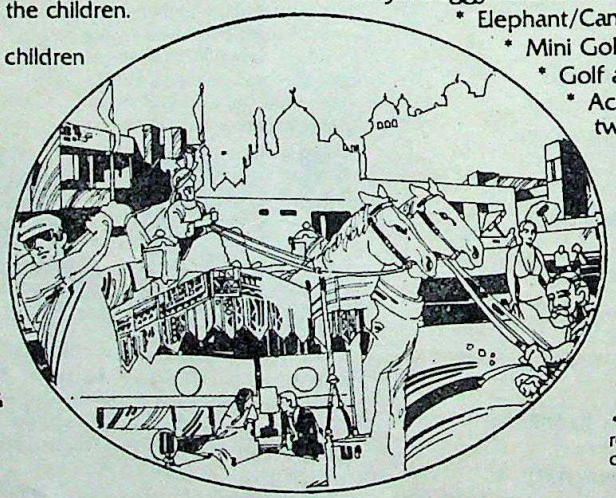
* Mini Golf. * Sauna for two.
* Golf at the Agra Club.
* Accommodation for two children below 12.



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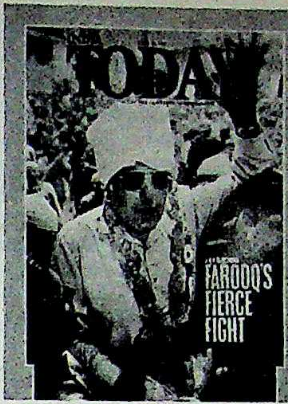

THE SON'S STRUGGLE

The article "Farooq's Fierce Fight" (June 15) drew a true portrait of the people's emotions and sentiments in Jammu & Kashmir. Ever since its formation the state has been run by sentiments rather than by any political factor. Farooq has to fight tooth and nail in order to maintain the grip and the grace of being the son of Sheikh Abdullah.

Siliguri *R.K. Gulati*

■ Farooq is not Sheikh Abdullah, but under his father's charisma he can win elections for some time. However, he has to prove his abilities to the people and face the stiff challenge of the opponents.

Calcutta *Prahlad Ghosh*

POWERED FLIGHT

Your comment "Helicopter Politics" (June 15) reminds us once again that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Our political leaders must realise that the relevant cry today is "Back to the masses".

Darjeeling *F.N. Wangdi*

■ If the people's admiration of N.T. Rama Rao and Ramakrishna Hegde's simple life-style and Chandra Shekhar's timely venture is anything to reflect public opinion, then the present day politicians would do well to dismount from their high horses and get to know the masses.

New Delhi *Vijay Babbar*

VALUED VICTORY

Apropos "Shot In The Arm" (June 15), the victory of Karnataka's Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde from Kanakapura was a triumph of 'value-based politics' over 'caste-based politics'.

New Delhi *D.R. Gulati*

POLITICAL LOW

The "Bobby Scandal" (June 15) proved that the the Bihar politicians have slumped to low depths. The police cannot take any action against them because the law is only for the ordinary people and not for the politicians.

Arrah *Gurpreet Singh*

HEALTHY RATIO

I don't think there is any harm if there are private medical colleges ("The Healing Touch", June 15) because there should be a certain doctor population ratio. In the US this ratio is 1:600 whereas in India it is 1:4,000. We need many more doctors to meet the World Health Organisation's requirements. And since the Government cannot run many more medical colleges than it is now the private medical colleges are justified.

Bangalore *K.S. Gangadhara*

NO FAVOURS

The box item "Favoured Few" (June 15) states "Prabhat Kumar Singh, 56.6 per cent marks, admitted to Ambedkar Medical College courtesy the state Health Department's letter dated October 13, 1981. Prabhat is the son of V.P. Singh, the then Uttar Pradesh chief minister and had been recommended by Union minister Rai."

I have no son named Prabhat Kumar Singh. The names of my sons are Ajeya Singh and Abhai Singh. They do not study in Ambedkar Medical College. Abhai Singh who secured 72.6 per cent marks in his Higher Secondary School Examination was admitted to the University Medical College, New Delhi, purely on merit basis. He completed his MBBS in 1981. His entire medical studies were completed in Delhi.

New Delhi *Vishwanath Pratap Singh*

The error is regretted. The reference was to a Dr V.P. Singh of Lucknow.

—Editor

MOTHER LOVE

My impression of Mother Teresa was that of an overpublicised social worker. Thanks to your article ("The Miracle Of Love", May 31), I now feel that she is the closest a human can come to being God.

Jaipur *Puneet Kanoria*

■ At last the cover denotes peace and love. I had begun to think that your magazine had started specialising in horror exposés. We like you as a balanced newsmagazine. Do not attempt to become the 'conscience keepers of the nation'.

Agra *Sudhir K. S[...]*

■ The cover photograph was marvellous and spoke for itself. The write-up was absolutely needless.

Tiruppur *P.N. Chandrasekar*

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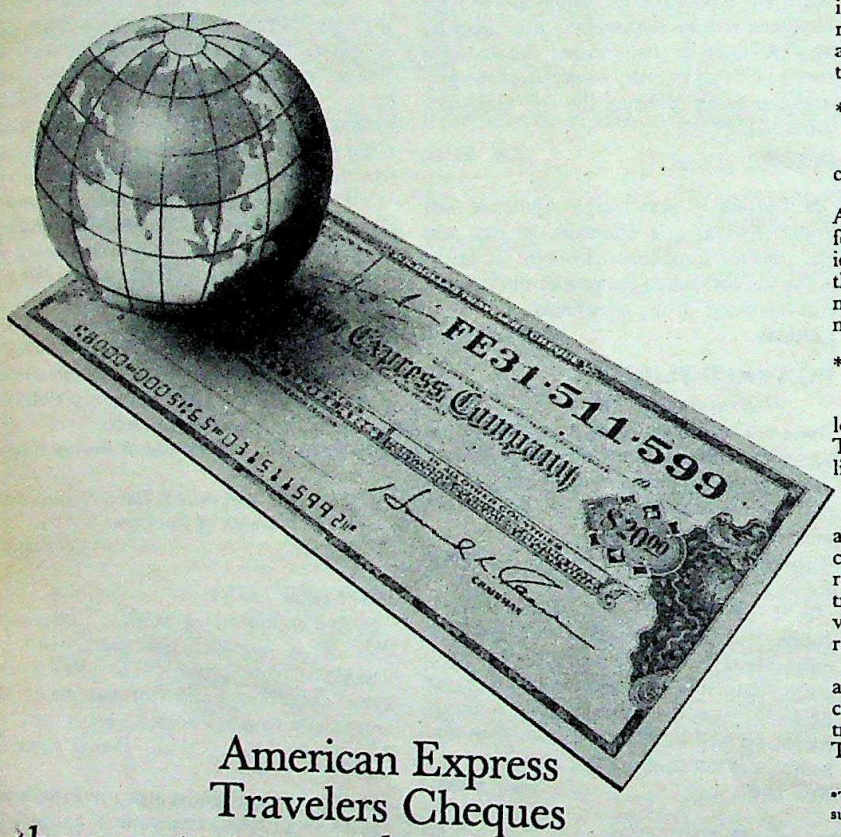

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...e Indians have different kinds of ...s. We fight over the superiority of our ...erse religions and do nothing for those ...ging under the weight of poverty. If we ...m the dedication of Mother Teresa, ...d be able to remove social and econ... ...equality from our country.

Param Hans Singh

...e selfless service of Mother Teresa ...be an eye-opener to the high priests, ...e only embodiments of luxury and ... How many lepers have they clean... ...d how many destitutes have they ...? What good will gospels do to the ... of hungry and sick?

Thomas Kurian

...e publicity being given to Mother ... missionary work is out of pro... There are several others like Baba ...d Shivaji Patwardhan who are doing ... service for the poor and disabled, ...e never received the publicity they ...

G.D. Puranik

...ther Teresa, it seems, is interested ...temporary relief to a few, for the ...that either she has lost all hopes of a ...eful solution or otherwise she is too ...ed by the prospect of violence in the ...permanent solution suggested by the ...mmunists.

Nirendra Nagar

...ur article says that the meals of the ...at the Missionaries of Charity in... ...inimum amount of fat, protein and ...rbons. It should be carbohydrates ...d hydrocarbons.

Ram Pathak

...T OF TRUTH

...m Shourie's article ("Assam ...s: Can Democracy Survive Them?"). ...is a superb systematic demolition of ...e of the democratic process in the ...ections. It shows all too clearly the ...e our whole government has fallen to ...gs to mind distressing echoes of the ...on of Sikkim in the '70s. Here is a ...rthy of the entire country. But ...o we go from here? The pity lies in ...ng.

Pari Duncan

...th speaks with penetrating force in ...le. Should we believe that public ...d journalism together have some ...? Should we expect Trivedi to resign ...dignity of our Election Commission ...a fair future of the elections in Indian ...cy?

R.L. Narang

■ The special report is a sincere and splendid piece of journalism. Reading it was like seeing a movie (released at an appropriate time). As the curtains were raised one could see the Government playing the adamant and shrewd villain and the Election Commission—a vamp—its protégé. Undoubtedly, no Indian (irrespective of the party lines he follows) would like the Assam elections to set a precedent for the future style of polling and it would be the greatest shame if the Assam Assembly survives as it stands on the distorted foundation of democratic laws.

Delhi *Rani Singh*

■ The most frustrating feeling one gets after reading a Shourie exposé is when one tries to figure out who his target audience could be—who not only read his articles but understand and appreciate the spirit with which they are written. Charan Singh? P.C. Sethi? C.M. Stephen? Raj Narain? The millions of illiterate voters who sent these people to Parliament? The hawker who sells smuggled goods? The RTO clerk who accepts a bribe without batting an eyelid? The Delhi babus?

We as people have been too tolerant of the like of people listed above, Arun Shourie is out of context here. That, and that precisely, is the misfortune of India and her people.

Bombay *R. Jayaram*

PLAIN TALK

The comment "India has nothing to conceal" (May 31) very correctly points out that the statement made by the late prime minister Nehru in the Lok Sabha in 1958 no longer holds good. For had the Government nothing to conceal it would not have accused the press of tarnishing India's image abroad or demoralising the police. In fact the press has done a commendable job in bringing to light the politicians who are making money illegally.

Simla *Anuj Tomar*

■ Kudos for writing a bold and brilliant editorial. You have rightly observed that though the thought of making tragic exposures with a view to preventing them in future is a utopian one, one must continue indulging in self-criticism for disinfecting one's ills.

Chandigarh *Balvinder Singh*

FALSE STEP

The photo feature of Chandra Shekhar's padayatra ("Marching To Discovery", May 31) is made to sound like a subject of ridicule. However objective the report may be it might have still misconceived the mission. You should have carried an interview with him to be able to reflect his political philosophy and the idea behind the march.

Goa *M.D. Dalvi*

■ The article was disappointing and lacked depth. The reader is left with a queasy feeling that the author has not restricted himself to merely reporting the event.

Bombay *Neerja Khaitan*

ASIAN AWAKENING

Chanchal Sarkar needs more than second thoughts on Kenyan Asian portrayal (May 31) while on a visit to Kenya. Unfortunately it seems that Sarkar's bird's-eye view has been limited only to the few bourgeois Asians. His biased article is based solely on information *vis-à-vis* their lifestyles. He even goes to the extent of saying that we Kenyan Indians have very little culture.... Perhaps he could tell us what culture is. Does he expect to see Bharat Natyam dancers and sitar maestros all over the place?

Nairobi *Neera Kapur*

FOR ART'S SAKE!

Incidents of this kind (Eye-catchers, May 31) expose the hollowness of modern art. Nobody actually knows what it really is. It is painful to see people's money being wasted to promote such absurdities.

New Delhi *Jai Singh Bika*

THE WAY THEY WERE

The management of the Presentation Convent was shocked by the disparaging remarks of its ex-student Jyoti Chauhan in The Changing Scene ("The Way We Were", May 31). She seems to have only ungrateful memories of a school that treated her with such kindness and consideration at so much inconvenience to the school authorities.

Special privileges like a separate room for dining and toilet for her own use were accorded to her at the insistence of her parents who were the rulers of the state—what choice did the school have?

The remarks about the rigging of class tests and sports are baseless and unworthy of comment.

Srinagar *Sister Mary*

■ There is a well-known saying around Oxford that those coming from the other place (Cambridge) think they own the world, whereas those from Oxford couldn't really care less. There is, however, one thing they do care about and that is when these two great seats of learning are confused with one another.

I had the good fortune of going to Oxford, and not Cambridge, as your article stated.

New Delhi *Gaj Singh*

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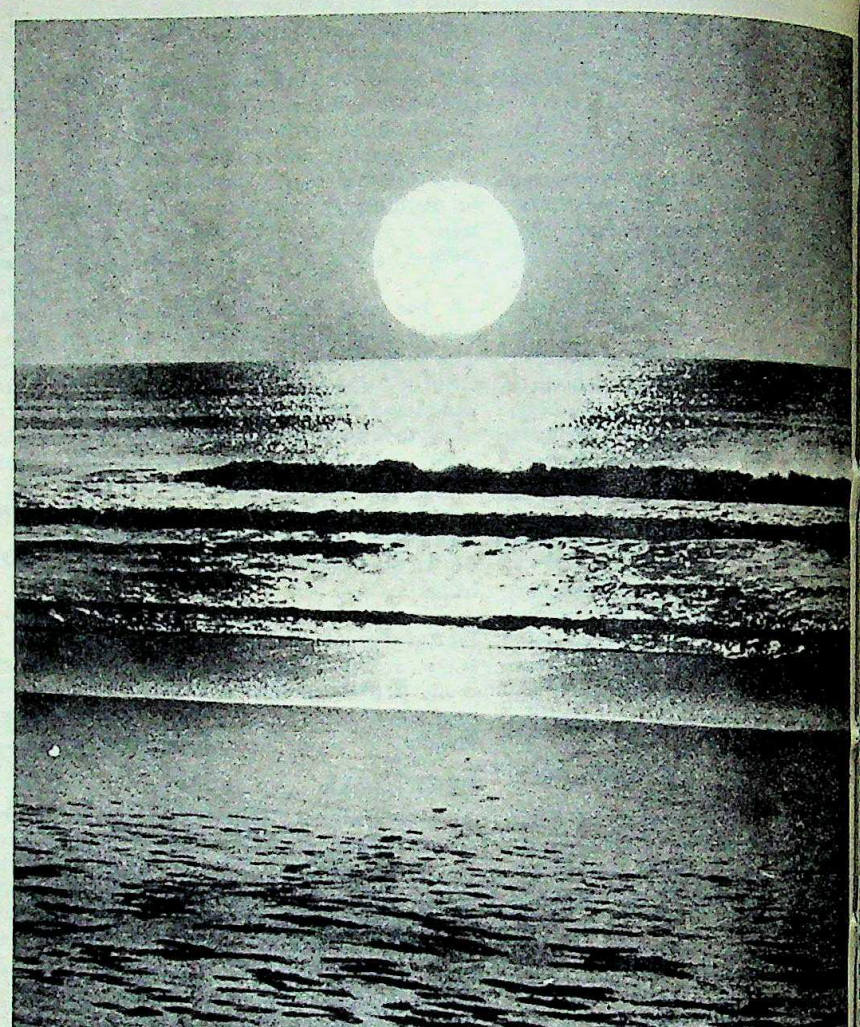

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INDIA TODAY

A New Beginning

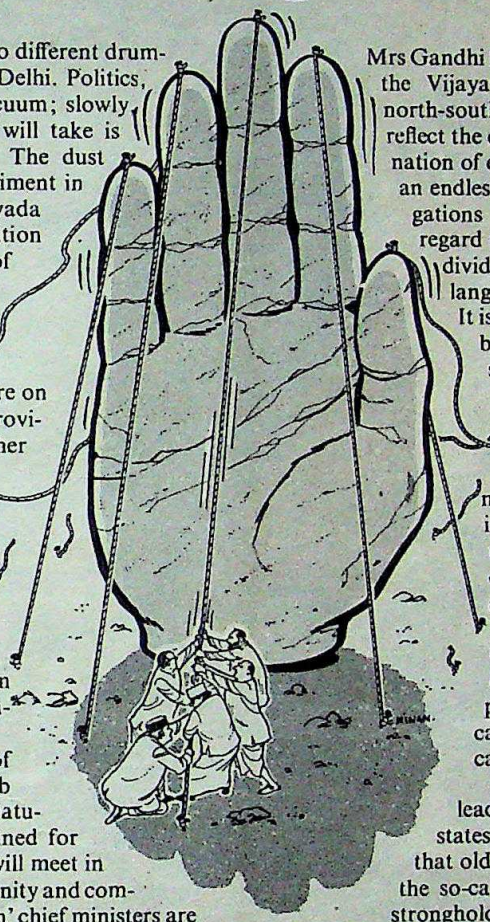
INDIA'S opposition leaders march to different drummers, but their routes converge at Delhi. Politics, like nature, does not tolerate a vacuum; slowly, tortuously, the shape electoral polity will take is beginning into focus through the haze. The dust raised by the crash of the Janata experiment in 1980 has still to settle, and the Vijayawada convention (of 24 leaders of 14 opposition groups) has not acquired the contours of the Spirit of '77.

But the initiative has passed into the hands of the Opposition, and the ruling party and its supreme leader Indira Gandhi are on the defensive. In 1977 the Emergency provided the chemistry needed to bring together leaders of the 'national' opposition parties. Most of them have burnt themselves out in pursuit of insatiable personal ambition and cannot rediscover that chemistry. The Vijayawada conclave did not result in a grand coalition, for which in any case the time is not ripe. But it did result in the formation of an opposition council to formulate alternative approaches to national issues.

From Vijayawada, a meeting of opposition leaders to discuss the Punjab issue at the call of the Akali Dal was a natural progression. The third step is planned for July when 'opposition' chief ministers will meet in New Delhi to discuss issues of national unity and communal harmony. Clearly, the 'opposition' chief ministers are anxious to discard their mantle of "regionalism". Yet, Indira Gandhi has reacted with unreasoned anger, equating "national interest" with a responsible (read toothless) opposition, and charging the Vijayawada confabulators with attempting to seize power through "undemocratic" means.

Mrs Gandhi is either indulging in political rhetoric or is feeling insecure. Vijayawada's participants spanned the ideological spectrum, and the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Communist Party of India can scarcely come together. There are still too many contradictions within the Opposition. Just as it is too early to expect a national alternative to emerge from a single convenor, it is premature to acquire a phobia for regionalism. Clearly and advisedly, the opposition chief ministers are anxious to discard their mantle of 'regionalism'. In the past, regional parties were the wildcats of Indian politics. Now they are the pacesetters. Regionalism is growing, and growing healthily. Not one of the 'regional' chief ministers has raised the banner of revolt, or even emitted a whisper of secession, or even flogged the dead horse of autonomy.

Regionalism can ideally lead to a resilient federalism, and if more states go to the polls, more regional parties can be expected to seriously threaten, and even unseat, the ruling Congress(I).



Mrs Gandhi has already lost the south, but to look at the Vijayawada meeting through an imagined north-south fracture would be churlish. Such fears reflect the chaos of the electoral system. India is a nation of endless elections, and elections produce an endless cacophony of promises, threats, allegations and lies. Voters are wooed without regard for a national ethic, and sought to be divided along the lines of caste, religion, language and region.

It is good that the Opposition has stopped beating aimlessly about for unity, and started groping towards a collaborative philosophy. Such a process cannot be considered, as the ruling party does, an agent of destabilisation. Regionalism is not subversive. Assertion of political will is not anti-national. India will hold together despite the pettiness of her politicians. Issues will sooner or later rise above personalities.

The truth—and it is unpalatable for both the ruling party and the national opposition parties—is that regional parties have upset the political applecart. State politics have become complicated and unpredictable, and the fact that the prime minister herself has now to lead her party's election campaigns in the states, often without electoral success, shows that old equations no longer hold. Neither can the so-called national opposition parties claim strongholds in more than one state each. Even the BJP, which was beginning to think of itself as a serious challenger to the Congress(I), has been worsted in Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu. This means that only regional parties stand a chance of unseating the ruling party in the states. That can only invest regional chief ministers with unprecedented political initiative.

The party system emerges from the interaction of two great struggles: the nationalist struggle for independence and the post-independence struggle for deeper and wider democracy. The nationalist struggle created the Congress party, and a cluster of opposition groups that were part of the "Congress culture". The struggle for a more meaningful democracy has begun to throw up regional parties, which draw sustenance from India's diversity, and from the unity that keeps this diversity alive.

The Cassandras would therefore do well to desist from conjuring up a splintering of the nation. Evolution can come about only through movement, and to presume that the tentative confluence of opposition groups will generate centrifugal tendencies is as naive as to expect the chief ministers to be marionettes tied lifelessly to a puppeteer in Delhi. The only viable alternative to the Congress(I) can be formed from below, with the regional parties coming together to provide a national regime that will be deeply rooted to the soil and have a truly democratic content.

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» I shan't be able to ring you about the article—isn't our phone system terrible. They call it cross bar; I think they mean cross wire.
—Mrs Gandhi to a journalist in Monday Morning, *a Lebanese magazine*

» This (the textile strike) has been the most peaceful strike....If Gandhiji were alive he would have given me a medal for peacefulness.
—Datta Samant in Sunday

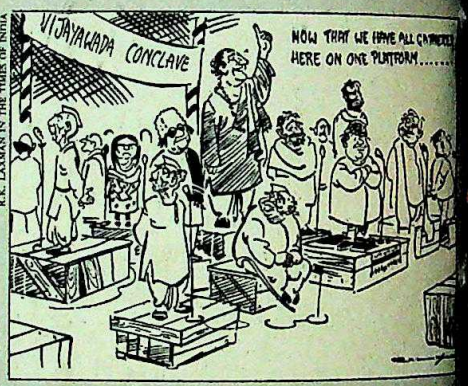
» I would like to be a doctor, if I can develop the cramming habit suitably.
—Lata Narayan, this year's Senior School Certificate Examination topper

» Elections or no elections, we (the Congress-I) are not here to play a subservient role or second fiddle to anybody.
—Mufti Mohammad Sayed in Onlooker

» Things in the country are going in exactly the opposite direction. You are killing far more people in police firings than by awarding death penalty.
—K.F. Rustamji in Current

» I have to live by my own means. Politics is not a secure place.
—G.K. Moopanar in The Sunday Observer

» Regionalism is not a political feeling. It is more a cultural idea...though I lived outside Kerala and outside India for many years, if I don't get rice for three days I feel something is wrong.
—Abu Abraham in Debonair



» I admire them, I adore them, and I love to talk with them. God's greatest creation is woman.
—Farooq Abdullah in Express Magazine

» Like the proverbial monkeys, Dr Datta Samant sees no failure, hears no failure and admits no failure in regard to his 16-month-long strike.
—Editorial comment in Bliti

» It is absolutely wrong to say that my relations with the prime minister have been severed. I still go to her residence as often as ever before and our relations will remain intact till the end of our lives.
—Swami Dhirendra Brahmachari in The Telegraph

» You could bring the Ganga to the South . . . but you cannot take a South Indian to New Delhi and wave the magic wand over him to make him prime minister. NTR will become prime minister when Telugu Desam becomes Bharata Desam or vice versa.
—Quark in the Sunday Review

» It is easier to cover your baldness under a turban and dye your beard. You look younger and your reflection in the mirror is reassuring.
—Khushwant Singh in The Hindustan Times

» If you put me against 10 men in real life, the outcome would be totally different from what happens on screen where the hero would come off with flying colours.
—Amitabh Bachchan in Cine Blitz

» I am a commercial showman. I am not a reformist, neither is it my job to preach. I can only project through entertainment, songs, music and through love.
—Raj Kapoor in Stardust

» Whatever the state of my career, I have always been a bigger star than Reena Roy.
—Shatrughan Sinha in Star & Style

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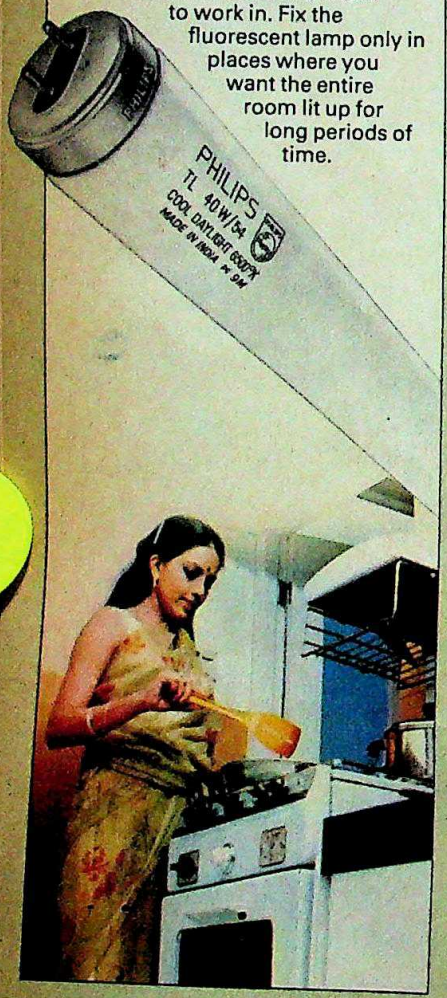
It takes more than one kind of lamp to light your home right

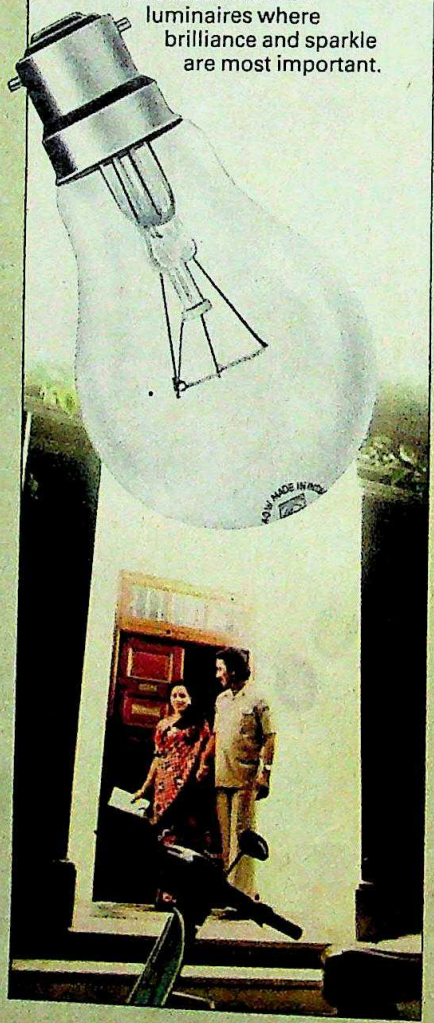
Philips Fluorescent Lamp

The energy-saving tubelight that's ideal for your kitchen. It throws light evenly to every nook of your kitchen creating a bright, shadow-free environment to work in. Fix the fluorescent lamp only in places where you want the entire room lit up for long periods of time.



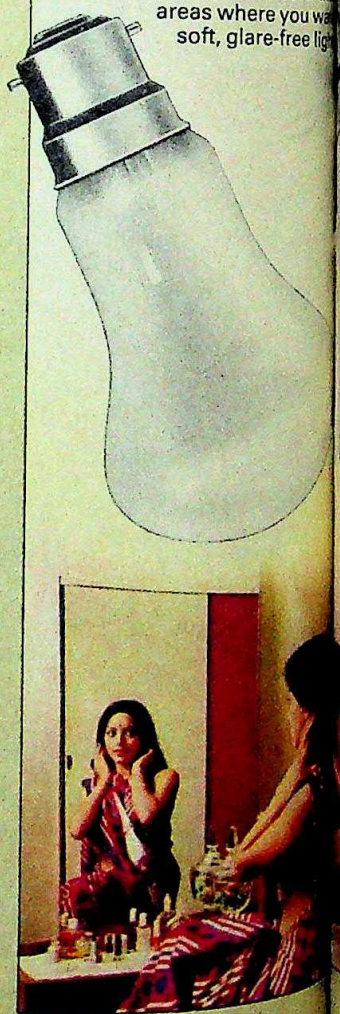
Philips clear GLS Lamp

The clear GLS lamp gives bright light. Preferably for your porch, garage, corridors, balconies, hallways, terraces. Clear lamps are ideal in closed luminaires where brilliance and sparkle are most important.



Philips Argenta-K Lamp

It's a new-look milky la that's coated by an improved process. To give uniformly soft and pleasant light. Use it open luminaires in the areas where you wa soft, glare-free ligh



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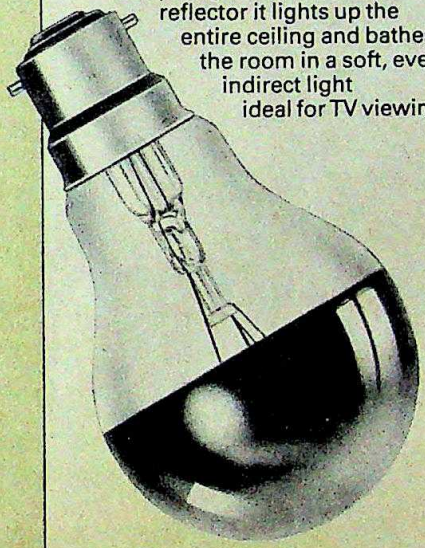
xt time you buy a lamp don't just ask for a watt or a 60 watt lamp. Pause and think. Where e you fitting the lamp? What kind of light you need? Clear and strong or soft and diffused? ncentrated on one spot or spread over a large a? Only Philips offers a wide range of lamps the home. One for every purpose.

ps
nta Superlux Lamp

coated lamp with a little window which directs the light downwards. ving you 30% more light than other lamps of the same wattage. It is ideal for places where you need a concentrated beam of light: writing tables, indoor games, etc.

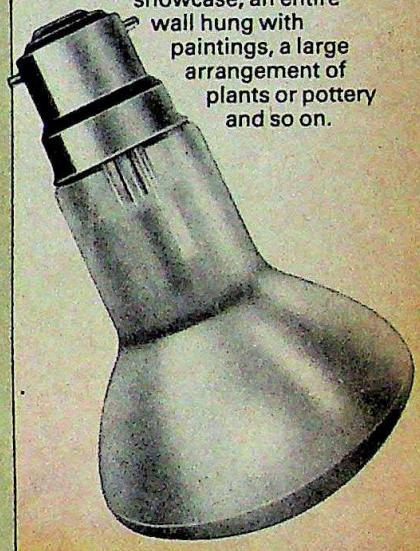
Philips Bowl Reflector Lamp

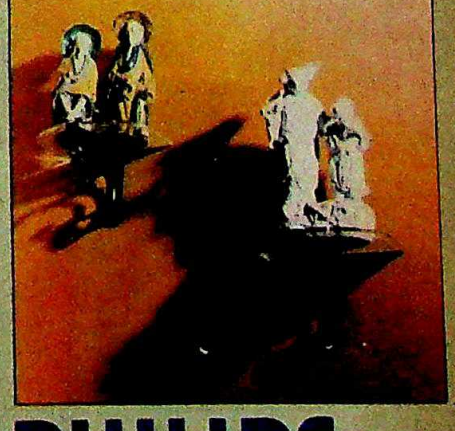
Fit it with different kinds of Philips reflectors and the possibilities are endless. With a parabolic reflector it can act as a spotlight. Without a reflector it lights up the entire ceiling and bathes the room in a soft, even, indirect light ideal for TV viewing.



Philips R-20 Reflector Lamp

Another Philips original! The R-20 Reflector Lamp is a mini floodlamp made specially for homes. Use it to light up a showcase, an entire wall hung with paintings, a large arrangement of plants or pottery and so on.





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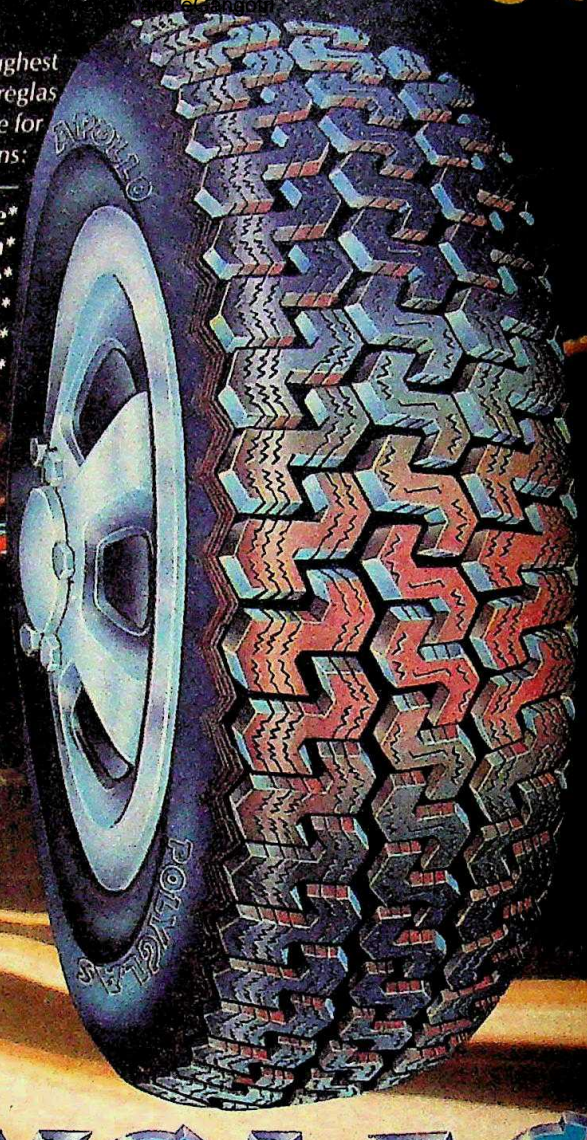

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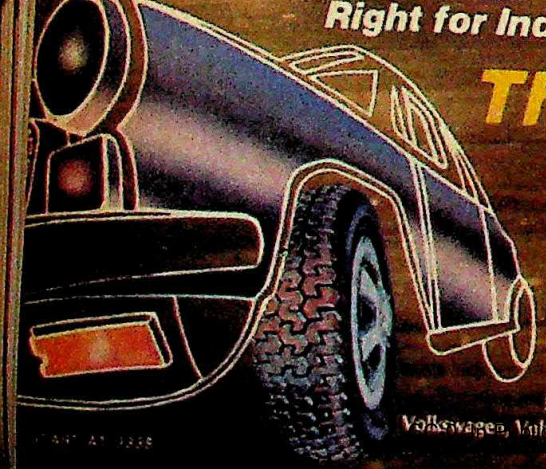

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APOLLO TYRES

A RAUNAQ ENTERPRISE

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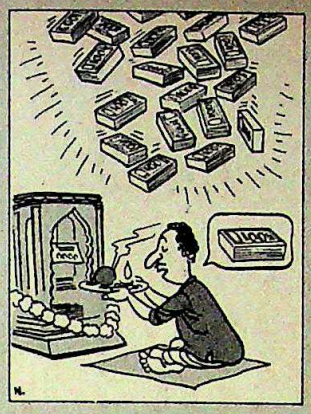
CKPOT

If at first you don't ceed, try, try, try again— e that persistent little spi- . And that is precisely what peon in a bidi factory in nnapatna town of Banga- e district did. After nearly o decades of buying lottery kets by the dozen, vanna, 38, hit an overflow- g jackpot last fortnight by nning the first prize of Rs 61 kh of the bumper draw of



the Rajasthan state lottery.

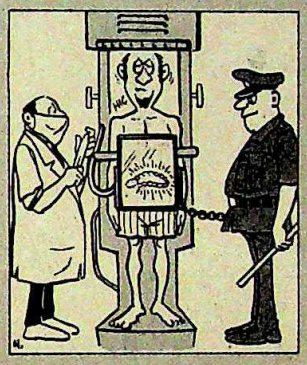
People winning lottery prizes is nothing new in this country, where there are dozens of lotteries to choose from. But the way in which Revanna sacrifices to the tantalising god of luck has to be seen to be believed. On an average, as he tells it, he spent Rs 200 a month out of his salary of Rs 600 a month on tickets, every month in the year, every year for 18 years. Finally, this incredible persistence paid off, and Revanna will now receive, after taxes, the sum of Rs 31.65 lakh. Not a bad return on a total investment of about Rs 45,000.

Revanna himself is a little surprised by the windfall. He says he had always wished for a prize of Rs 50,000 so that he could buy a house. Now, he says, he will do nothing for six months before starting a business of his own. But first, he will buy a house in a 'posh' locality.

ANISHING TRICK

A thief and his booty are oon parted. At least, that is ow it was going to be in Thane, Maharashtra. Abdul Mohamad Shaikh last month llegedly snatched a gold hain from the neck of a aidservant but a passer-by abbed Shaikh. He was etermined to hold on his loot nd, in desperation, repor- tedly swallowed the chain.

That was a bit of a surprise for the policemen but they weren't going to let Shaikh get away with it. He was admitted to the Thane Civil Hospital and, every day, with police officers looking eagerly on, an X-ray beam was directed at his body. They started with the throat, where the chain had initially got stuck and followed its slow and



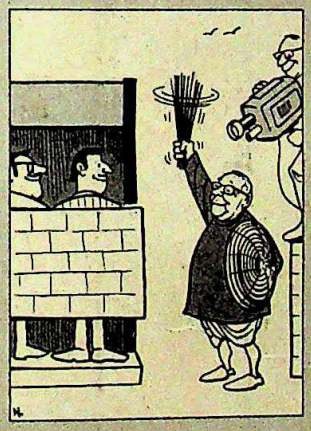
painful progress down the gullet and into the abdomen. At the week's end, the chain had got into one of the more accessible parts of the body.

Then, it just vanished. Doctors told the police that the chain was no longer in Shaikh's body. The police had to release Shaikh, who walked out of the hospital grinning from ear to ear. Said a police officer: "$£××%&!"

NEW BROOM

When VIPs actually do omething, it is news. Last ortnight, Delhi's Chief Exe- utive Councillor Jag Pravesh Chandra set out with a new room to sweep urinals clean. nfortunately, the operation id not turn out quite the way e had expected it to.

First, he arrived at a rinal at Daryaganj, with a uitably reverent crowd in his ake. However, somebody ad obviously got there before



him, because the place was positively sparkling, with DDT powder sprinkled all around to get rid of the smell. A little peeved, Chandra shouldered his broom and decided to clean up the urinal opposite Ansari Market instead.

Apparently, this one too had received the treatment but by this time Chandra was tired of wandering around in search of dirt. There was still a hold-up though—the Doordarshan people were waiting for a video cassette to arrive. Meanwhile, a few bystanders obligingly urinated to give Chandra something to clean. Finally, as the cameras clicked away, he wielded brush, cleaning powder and water.

A sweeper, watching the proceedings spellbound, commented that "I do this every day but somebody else gets the publicity." Chandra, after his marathon, straightened an aching back to inform the public that "I am available every day between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. to clean up urinals".

T'S A DOG'S WIFE

The invitation read: 'Mr nd Mrs Ram Dulare invite ou to attend the wedding of heir daughter Kuiya with Motilal on May 28 evening. No presents, please.'

They came in their undreds, dressed in their very est. A beaming Ram Dulare elcomed them, brimming ver with joy. In a secluded oom behind the hall, Kuiya aited for her groom.

And he came. With two bands blaring out a barely tuneful mixture of bass and treble and drums, Motilal strode proudly down the street to his bride's house, dressed in shorts and bush shirt, the *sehra* bobbing on his head. Ram Dulare embraced his *damaad* at the door of the hall. Then the wedding began.

An hour later, to the cheers of the assembly, Ram Dulare embraced Kuiya, his eyes filling with tears. There

were few dry eyes around. "Bow wow!" said Kuiya. "Woof!" answered her husband Motilal and the two went off to live happily ever after.

Ram Dulare's earnest wish to earn the *punya* that comes from *kanyadaan* was thus fulfilled. So what if the bride was an adopted dog and the groom the pet of a colleague in the Kanpur Electricity Supply Administration. Every dog has his day.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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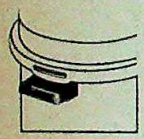
Here is how the GRS* makes the New Prestige the only totally safe pressure cooker

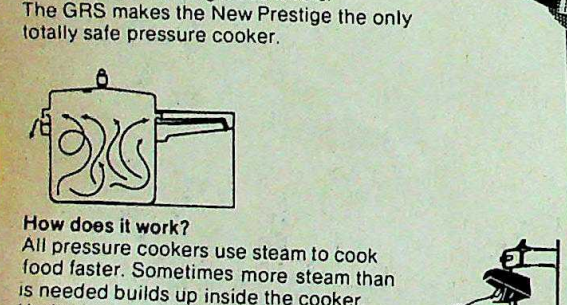
New Prestige



What is the GRS?
The Gasket Release System is a unique design innovation that makes pressure cooking as safe as boiling water. A slot in the lid over the rubber gasket provides a safe, sure outlet for steam when it reaches dangerous levels.
The GRS makes the New Prestige the only totally safe pressure cooker.

How does it work?
All pressure cookers use steam to cook food faster. Sometimes more steam than is needed builds up inside the cooker. Under normal conditions this is let off from the weight valve on the top. If this vent gets clogged with food it could lead to an eruption.

In the New Prestige, on the rare occasion when steam builds up excessively, the GRS enables the rubber gasket to expand and stretch out of the slot and let off the steam downwards safely.



The GRS does not interfere with the normal cooking process.
No, not at all. There is nothing to replace. All you do once the steam is let out is push the rubber gasket back into the slot with a spoon, clean the vent and use.

Why is the GRS essential?
When you replace a safety plug you may get a spurious one. This will not work in an emergency. Unfortunately you have no way of telling a genuine from a spurious safety plug. Why take a chance?

THE GRS NEVER FAILS TO WORK

100% safe

*Gasket Release System

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Prestige

the people who introduced pressure cooking to India

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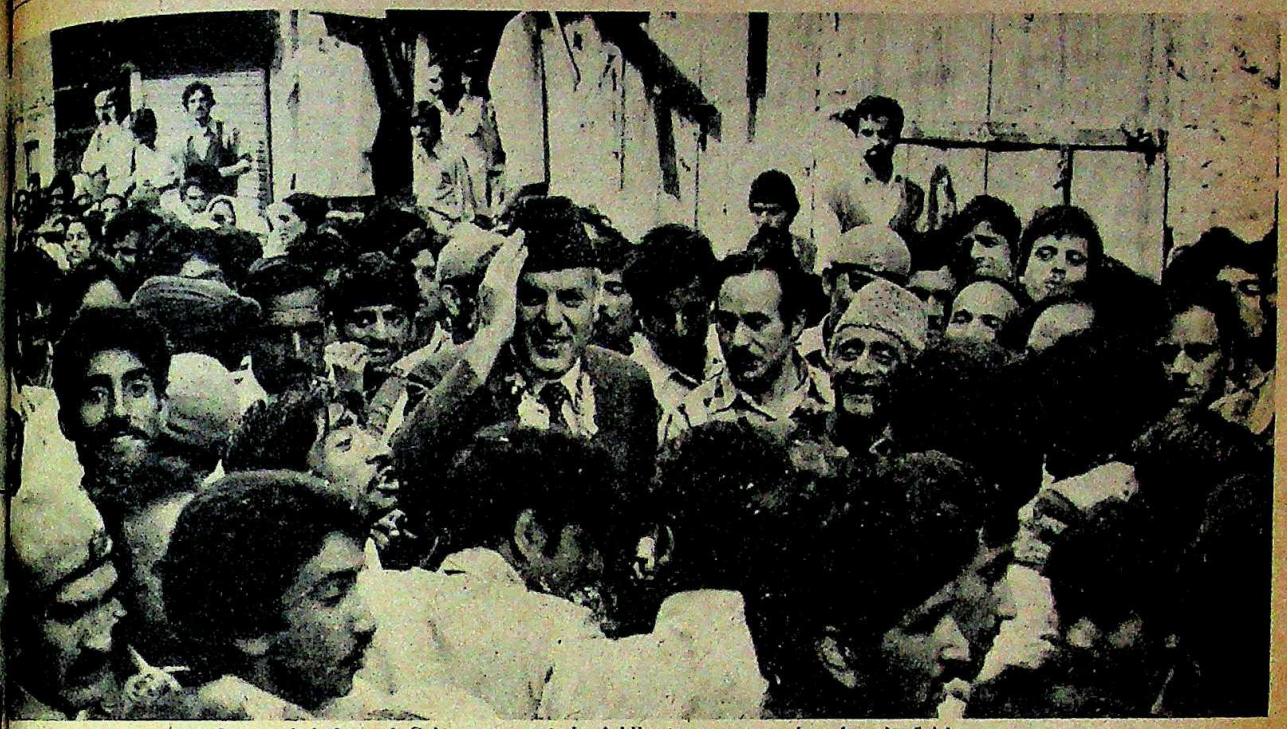

Farooq led through Srinagar streets by jubilant supporters: keeping the faith

AMU & KASHMIR ELECTIONS

Farooq's New Mandate

IN THE afternoon of June 10, milling crowds in front of the election scoreboard put up by the Information Department in Srinagar saw the tally of the ruling National Conference (NC) move up to an absolute majority in the 76-member assembly. For hours after that, firecrackers went on the roads and the twisting bylanes of the city. As evening descended, the overcast sky was lit up with fireworks. The night resounded with shouts of "*Alibaani*!"—the party symbol of the NC.

For Farooq Abdullah, NC president and the state's chief minister no repose could have been harder earned. In a two-month-long battle he had finally stalled the Congress(I) at the slopes of Banihal, winning 46 seats in the process.

The day certainly belonged to Farooq. He convincingly proved the strength of his party in the politics of the Kashmir valley. He caught up with the 1977 tally of the NC when his father, the late Sheikh Abdullah, was alive and the stock of the Congress had hit an all-time nadir. More significant was the NC's penetration in Jammu where it won 11 seats and was runner-up to the Congress(I) in most of the 32 constituencies.

Quite a few myths were exploded. The most notable one was that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had a solid base in Jammu. The party failed to get a single seat, and in all but four constituencies, BJP candidates failed to secure even the third position. Even after roping in its entire national leadership, including president Atal Behari Vajpayee, for the campaign, the party was virtually wiped out of the reckoning. Most of its candidates forfeited their deposits.

The other myth was that the Islamic parties, flush with resources, would make conspicuous dents in NC's position in the valley. The newly-formed People's Conference of Abdul Ghani Lone, which fielded 29 candidates and raised slogans questioning Kashmir's accession to India won only one seat, that of Lone himself in the Karnah constituency of Kupwara district, and put up a credible fight in three other constituencies, all in the Kupwara-Baramulla belt. The fundamentalist Jamaat-i-Islami lost all the 26 seats it had contested including the Sopore constituency held earlier by its leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

Rigging Charges: The only parties left in the field were the NC and the Congress(I) and never before were their relations so acrimonious. Alleging that polling in the valley's 42 constituencies had been rigged by the NC, state Congress(I) leaders launched a mass movement agitating against blatant rigging by the NC. Bouncing back from his double defeat in the constituencies of Homeshalibug and Bijbehara, Mufti Mohammed Sayed, the PCC(I) president said: "This is exactly like Bhutto's 1978 election in Pakistan. This election has no legitimacy. It is based on fraud."

Mufti's view was echoed by one and all in the Congress(I). Trembling with rage, Shafi Qureshi, defeated candidate from the Srinagar parliamentary constituency stormed: "We want repoll in the whole valley and in some Jammu constituencies under direct supervision of the Central Election Commission and not under this unscrupulous state administration." Even the People's Conference and the Jamaat which had raised the bogey of Mrs Gandhi trying to subjugate the state were obliged to join the chorus.

The charge of rigging promptly broadcast by the AICC(I) in New Delhi was triggered by the alleged unearthing of a large number of unaccounted and unfused ballot papers in various constituencies long after polling. Even during polling there were complaints of booth-capturing and intimidation in 18 polling stations spread over 10 constituencies. The Election Commission ordered

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repolling at Haba-Kadal in the heart of Srinagar where 16,000 Hindus complained that they were not allowed to vote. The NC candidate Ghulam Mohammed Bhat won the seat by the incredibly large margin of 16,000 votes over Congress(I) rival Pyarelal Karihaloo.

In some constituencies such as Zadibal, also in Srinagar, NC candidate Sheikh Rashid managed to beat his charismatic brother Farooq in the popularity contest by garnering 49,937 of the 57,254 votes polled, or 90 per cent of the vote. In 1977, NC secured only 51 to 55 per cent of the votes at Zadibal.

Unemployed Force: Equally controversial was the refusal by the state Government to deploy a mixed force of the state police and personnel from the 10,000 strong paramilitary forces sent to the state at each of nearly 8,000 polling stations. The Chief Secretary Noor Mohammed had given such an undertaking to Union Home Secretary T.N. Chaturvedi when he visited the state early in the fortnight. However, the stations were manned only by state police leaving the paramilitary either idle in their barracks or engaged in merely guarding the main roads.

Privately, Congressmen had hoped to win at least seven seats in the valley. The protected telephone lines from Srinagar to New Delhi were crackling for three days with urgent appeals to the Congress(I) high command to take drastic steps including such ploys as dismissal of the caretaker ministry and the ordering of a wholesale repoll. Their zeal was partly diminished by Mrs Gandhi's departure for a five-nation tour on June 7.

Popular Division: Stricter observance of the election norms might have altered the arithmetic of the results but not their substance. As a non-political academic of Srinagar University put it: "The ratio of seats between the NC and the Congress(I) is consistent with the division of popular sympathy." It was borne out by the wild scenes of jubilation over the NC victory in Kashmir and the rumbustious celebration in Jammu over the Congress(I)'s virtual sweep in that region. Supporters of Sardar Rangeel Singh, the victorious Congress(I) candidate from Jammu West distributed sweets to passers-by for two days. Singh exulted: "Jammu shows the way for the whole state."

But that is most unlikely in view of the massive mandate established by the NC in the valley securing nearly 75 per cent of the popular votes in the region. "Congress(I) never get a foothold in Kashmir. On the trary NC will emerge the leading pa Jammu six years hence," said Farooq h his optimism on the fact of NC getting cent of the votes in Jammu. But the restricted to the Muslim-dominated of Doda, Rajouri and Poonch. The Hindu-dominated seat that NC won its candidate mainly because the BJP's Kumar Kaushal and Bhim Singh, p local leader and president of Panther drew away nearly 35 per cent of cutting heavily into non-NC votes.

IN THE coming six years, NC will ha work overtime to heal the fracture state's politics. "We have to build ges," said Farooq (*see interview*). In hi Cabinet is Jagjivan Lal, the represent from Reasi, a Harijan leader. He is also to include, via the Legislative Council, am Wanchuk, NC candidate from Leh lost despite the Dalai Lama's support. permanent fixtures are Pyarelal Handoo Bodhraj Bali, Hindus and NC veterans.

FAROOQ ABDULLAH

Tough Talk

FRESH from his thumping victory, Farooq Abdullah basked in the gentle sun on the lawn of his Gupkar Road house in Srinagar. He spoke to Correspondent SUMIT MITRA *about his electoral success and the prospect for the state. Excerpts:*

On charges of rigging:

Just as my party has swept the Kashmir valley the Congress(I) has swept the Jammu region. Why is the Congress(I) not disputing the results in Jammu? They do not know what a mass upsurge means. That's why they are clamouring for a repoll everywhere. I challenge them that in any repoll we shall increase our lead from 10,000 to 50,000.

On accusations that his party stirred up communal feelings:

The people do not believe that. The National Conference could not have secured nearly 27 per cent of the popular vote in Jammu itself. In all Hindu areas of the state we have vastly improved on our 1977 performance. The people have accepted us as a secular party. They have not accepted Mrs Gandhi's party as secular.

On future Congress(I) pressure in the Assembly:

They have always put pressure on us without success, though it does not bother me in the least. I am 46, I will see many of the Congress(I) leaders go in my lifetime. I am not vindictive. Let the Congressmen be here and I am not going to touch them with a barge pole.

On the tasks ahead:

My main task will be to build bridges with all the minority groups: the Hindus, the Sikhs, the Ladakhis. I am committed to following the same single line administration we have followed so far and there is no question of favouring any particular region of the state at the expense of another.

Farooq: confident

On the relationship with New Delhi:

I expect that the relationship between the Union Government and the Government of Jammu & Kashmir will be smooth but I don't know if the relationship between the National Conference and the Congress(I) will be any better in view of the attitude taken by the party towards us. And with characters like Mufti Mohammed Sayed and Ghulam Rasool Kar ruling the roost here I hardly see the prospect of better days ahead.

On Article 370:

Nobody can fiddle with that and take the risk of setting the entire state on fire. But at the same time I don't want to be at loggerheads with the Centre. I want my people to get their daily bread I want them to survive. I want the state to come up industrially.

Investors from the rest of India can come here on lease terms. I want more and more of them to come. I need men like Swraj Paul. I want the Sindhis of Hong Kong to come. I don't mind if the Galadaris of Dubai come here.

Above all I need the Centre's munificence and understanding. Dal Lake, for instance, cannot be developed without Central help. There are power projects urgently calling for sanction and help from the Centre.

On the Opposition:

I will do everything within my capacity to help consolidate the unity of the opposition forces in the country. The Vijayawada meeting has been a good beginning. There will be more such meetings. The unity of the opposition forces is necessary to correct the aberrations that have set in, to restore the democratic process, to hold the country together. We in the Opposition do not further want to be accused of disunity.

On relations with Mrs Gandhi:

I am grateful to Mrs Gandhi for having campaigned so hard against me. It has given me a stature which even my father did not have.

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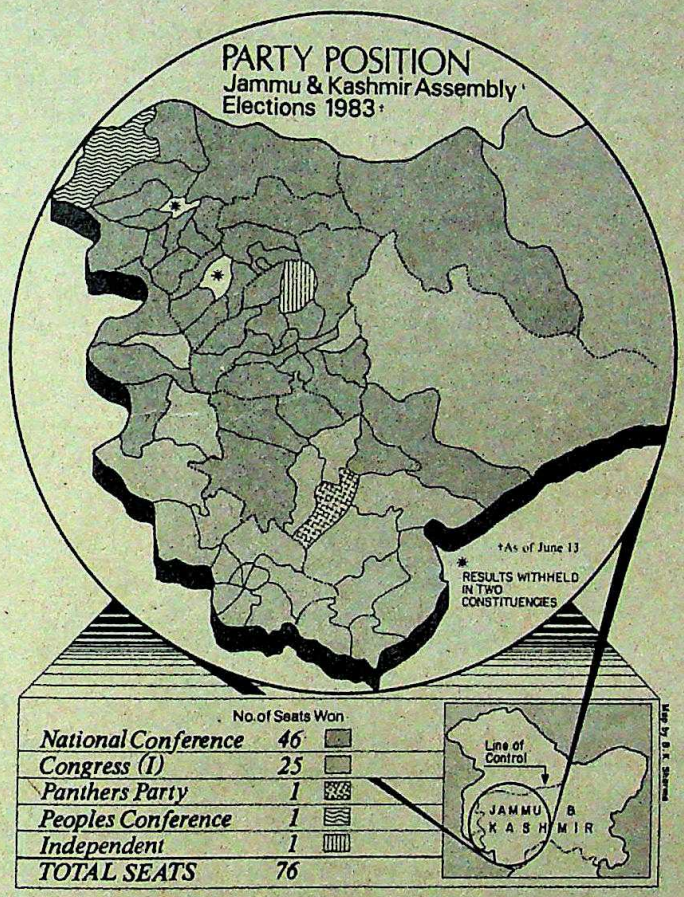
member of the upper house while won the prestigious Pahalgam seat. Farooq's choice of men to build is virtually limited to this handful. is a keen parliamentarian but is disliked by the pandits of Kashmir; mes from Jammu but has little base re: Lal won the election mainly on ength of Reasi's 8,000-odd Muslim vo- Farooq, the only way out of the im- to allow defection of Congressmen he hates to admit it. "I shall never defectors; instead I am to vigorously implement -Defection Act in which is the pioneer," he said.

mours: He will have to bridges in his own party ven since Sheikh Abdul- death last September. In hile conflicting trends ap- during counting, his partymen were encour- rumours that Ghulam mmed Shah, his brother- and former number two Sheikh's cabinet, was ing with Mrs Gandhi. I even heard that I had flown to Jammu in an Air Force helicopter to Mrs Gandhi," said an med Shah, sitting in the of his newly formed legal Shah and Company. Inte- ly, three of his business rs are former ministers ad either been dropped by eikh in his last days or cluded from the ministry rooq.

reply to these canards by ence," Shah said. But alous NC men would rea- ew circles around half a close followers of Shah ing his nephew Ghulam ddin Shah, a member of 's new Cabinet. Bhat, the winner of Kadal who is regarded as one of the d Shah men, retorted: "It is useless to an old issue. Shah is only a relative of Abdullah whom we regard as our and that is all." But Bhat like many close to Shah is nursing a grievance as stripped of his post as provincial nt of the party and was replaced by Samad Teeli, a political lightweight.

rkish Attitudes: But most of NC's differences are sure to be ironed out face of the concerted onslaught of the s(I), both within and outside the Mufti forewarned. Many senior bu- ats in the secretariat fear that the all- character of the Congress(I) are going to be reflected in increasingly strident claims for greater allocation of resources and opportunities when both are limited.

Proof of this was available on June 7, a day before the repoll in 10 constituencies when All India Radio, seemingly not without motive, led its bulletin with the rapid strides made by the Congress(I) in Jammu but kept completely silent on the NC's progress in the Valley. "Who needs Jammu? The valley alone will ensure us victory"—this was the slogan raised by the NC zealots celebrating in the city that day.



Such sloganeering in Kashmir never really means much but the late Sheikh often used it with superb dramatic effect mainly to bully the Centre. In the 1977 Assembly elections, Mirza Afzal Beg, the Sheikh's deputy went round the state extracting promises of support from people and making them swear on a piece of rock salt, the symbol of Pakistan. Farooq used the same ploy when he befriended the *mir-waiz* of Kashmir Moulvi Farooq and his Awami Action Committee before the elections. The *mir-waiz* projects himself as secular but in practice it is his supporters who are raising communal slogans injecting an element of frenzy into the scene, even stopping cars to solicit money, ostensibly to buy fireworks.

The *mir-waiz*, who now claims to have swung public opinion totally in favour of NC by his last-minute support never tires of reminding that the Kashmir problem still exists. Says a former minister in the Sheikh's cabinet: "Farooq Abdullah just fell into the *mir-waiz* trap. There is not a single seat which the NC won because of *mir-waiz*'s support but it had its backlash in Jammu. We lost our three old seats, Ramban, Kishtwar and Darhal, purely due to the *mir-waiz* factor."

Political Consequences: Sheikh Abdullah spent a lifetime acquiring power and perfecting the art of using it. Farooq has inherited power but is still in the process of learning how to use it. And the Congress(I), filling up nearly a third of the new Assembly is eagerly waiting for Farooq to make mistakes.

Mrs Gandhi cannot forget her humiliation this time when she had mustered all her resources to subjugate the NC and keep Farooq under her control. This was the last state assembly election before the general election slated for early 1985. To that extent this was her last gilt-edged opportunity to prove her abiding capacity to prevail over firmly anchored, regional powers. She knows that when the election drums roll she will be accused of not being able to keep the country together.

But the NC snatched the chance away from her. Nor is it likely that the present NC leadership will stand by her when the need arises. The Congress(I) high command is disturbed by Farooq's rising profile amidst the opposition leaders and his deep friendship with H.N. Bahuguna, Democratic Socialist Party chairman and anathema for Mrs Gandhi. It is also aware of an NC plan to admit former Congress chief minister Syed Mir Qasim and project him at the Centre as the new messiah of the Indian Muslims.

For Mrs Gandhi these are ominous portents. She can still try and win Farooq over by being extra-generous just as she had seemingly mollified West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu by sweet words and large grants. But if she employs the stick oftener than the carrot, Farooq can beat her at her own game, as last fortnight's elections confirmed.

—SUMIT MITRA in Srinagar

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THE OPPOSITION

Once More With Feeling

THE SEED of the 'Spirit of 1977', culminating with the grand alliance of the opposition parties, was sown in the winter of 1975, at Tihar Jail. For non-Congress(I) leaders, the present situation is hardly that daunting. Instead of meeting as fellow detenus, 24 leaders of 14 opposition parties shared a common platform last month with a surging crowd at Vijayawada ready to cheer them along with their leader, N.T. Rama Rao, the host and chief minister of Andhra Pradesh. And, to keep the flame burning, they will meet again in New Delhi next month.

For the opposition parties, the going had never been as good since 1977. It began early this year when widespread rumours of a snap poll prompted a breakaway group of the Lok Dal, small in number but including crafty politicians like George Fernandes and Karpoori Thakur, to merge with the Janata Party. Simultaneously, another combination was emerging on the scene, comprising H.N. Bahuguna, chairman of the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), and Sharad Pawar, president of the Congress(S). The Bahuguna-Pawar axis, nearer to the heart of the left parties, has of late begun a close race with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to woo Charan Singh, the Lok Dal president and leader of north India's 15 million jats.

Though there was an inner urge to combine, mutual distrust and individual rigidity still formed insurmountable barriers. Rama Rao's invitation came at this juncture, providing the Opposition with the last chance to launch itself on the least mutually destructive course before the general elections 18 months away. "It is like early courtship," said an irrepressible Bahuguna, "when nobody really pops the question: but the question is very much there at the back of the mind."

The ochre-clad Rama Rao, true to his reputation in films, provided the ideal backdrop. On May 28, his 60th birthday, the day-long grill in coastal Andhra's hottest town, popularly known as 'Blaze-wada', ended with the most spectacular gift that only fantasy could conjure up: an assembly of opposition leaders extending from BJP to the two communist parties.

It was a Noah's Ark of opposition politics. A smartly-dressed Farooq Abdullah, chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir, enquired after the health of L.K. Advani, general secretary of the BJP. After the deliberations were over, both rushed to the airport on their way back to Kashmir to resume campaigning against each other. But—and such is the irony of politics—there was no trace of rancour when they exchanged notes in the plane.

There were still more irreconcilables that Rama Rao had reconciled. M. Basavapunnaiah, politburo member of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), and C. Rajeswara Rao, secretary-general of the Communist Party of India (CPI)—both from Andhra Pradesh and regarded in their parties as ideologues—flashed smiles at the young Maneka Gandhi, president of the Rashtriya Sanjay Manch and widow of Sanjay Gandhi, their collective anathema.

Transient Glory: The carnival spirit invaded the consciousness against the background of Rama Rao's magnificent showmanship. The venue of the conclave, a building belonging to the state electricity board on the shoulder of a hill, 22 km away from Vijayawada, stood up in fortress-like isolation from the jagged landscape. In the evening, as a crowd of 4 lakh people braved a sudden gust of rain and wind to greet the saffron-clad Rama Rao on a superbly back-lit stage, the opposition leaders shared platform, the ovation, and literally basked reflected glory.

But that was a transient moment. When the euphoria was over, they found that they had agreed on only one issue: the need to place Mrs Gandhi whose failure to provide stable rule—their common resolution—constituted the gravest threat to the unity and integrity of the country today". But that was as old as a litany could be. What was lacking was the willingness to hammer out a common programme, the "lowest common multiple", as Jagjivan Ram, president of Congress(J), put it at the outset.

However, the familiar ambiguities and the old bickerings returned in no time. Rajeswara Rao issued a statement the next day saying that though Mrs Gandhi's internal policies were wrong her external policies were not all that bad. The BJP, after the conclave, front-paged in its official organ an "inside report" containing scathing blistering attacks on the CPI and its "friends" like Bahuguna for trying to "manipulate" the show.

Lobbies: During the conclave and afterwards, the BJP also reiterated its decision not to enter into any alliance with either the Muslim League or the CPI (not the CPI-M). The left lobby struck back by cleverly [illegible]

Opposition line-up in Vijayawada (from left) Unnikrishnan, Hegde, MGR, Advani, Rama Rao, Rajeswara Rao, Basavapunnaiah, Ad[illegible] Bahuguna, Farooq Abdullah and Maneka Gandhi: an early courtship

Some political parties deliberately kept a low profile. The Lok Dal and the BJP sent one man each, and so did the two communist parties. But the DSP and the Congress(S) were represented by their presidents as well as general secretaries. Among the veterans of the opposition, notable absentees were Charan Singh, Atal Behari Vajpayee and Jyoti Basu. But even though Singh was not present, the Lok Dal General Secretary, Shyam Nandan Mishra, found a place by [illegible]

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committee that drafted the resolu- other members being K.V. Raghu- Reddy, general secretary of the DSP, anikrishnan, general secretary of the ss(S) and Ravindra Verma, general y of the Janata Party. Thus, the BJP communists were kept out of the that was entrusted with providing the cument for Vijayawada, and subse- conclaves.

T THE the communists and the BJP rry their individual stamps too distinctly to be part of even a loose The exercise was therefore aimed at g together the 'middle-roaders' but, guna hastened to add, "always lea- door open for the forces of socialism cularism". Though he emphatically that he is dividing the Opposition, na is actually working for understan- ong all parties other than the Cong- and the BJP.

ma Rao, however, has assiduously l clear of such ideological niceties. idea of inviting the opposition lea- was first broached to him, two weeks his thumping victory in the Andhra h elections in January, he has written ally to each leader.

note **Handling:** Rama Rao's suppor- rked hard to make the opposition a success. And, like an astute politi- e took every care to de-emphasise the ces within the opposition ranks, fer- giving an impression of cohesion and ces.

his keynote address at the conclave set e of the session for its two elements: dent criticism of Mrs Gandhi and the approval expressed for regional ents and greater autonomy for the For instance, he took the audience by when he held Mrs Gandhi guilty of an "undemocratic" election on the of Assam. He came out in equally terms against her for the Akali prob- for the deteriorating Centre-state s. He also provided the forum for leader Surjit Singh Barnala and Abdullah to mount blistering at- on the Congress(I).

Southern Aspirations: Rama Rao did p on ideologies or policies, for that only have exposed the disunity among position forces. Instead, he unerringly the real 'lowest common multiple' of pposition—hostility towards Mrs He politely turned down a sug- by Bahuguna to preside over a rally Delhi's Boat Club, but hinted that he not be averse to assuming a promi- ce in a future alliance of the leaders Congress(I) states. Already he has leadership form Jyoti Basu, the West Bengal chief minister, in the crusade for more power to the states.

Obviously Rama Rao's game is to lock Mrs Gandhi in a direct battle with a combination of opposition parties in the Ganga valley, and then to emerge as the leader of the non-Congress(I) states and hence the only balancing factor. The significance of the Vijayawada conclave lay in the fact that, for the first time in the history of independent India, 14 disparate non-Congress political parties got together at one place and were able to issue a joint statement, howsoever bland it may be.

In a sense, the conclave was rather like the meeting of the non-aligned countries early this year where leaders of 99 developing nations gathered in New Delhi last March. The solidarity was more symbolic than substantive. What happened in Vijayawada last month was only a feeble attempt at uniting the opposition parties. What success it will achieve remains to be seen. The seed has been sown; the sapling is yet to be born.

—SUMIT MITRA in Vijayawada

ANDHRA PRADESH

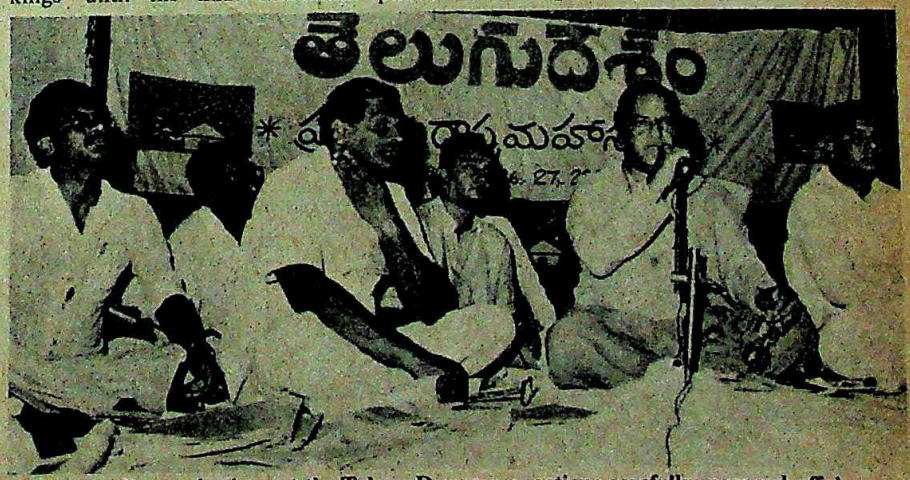
Star Role

THERE was little to suggest that it was the meeting of a democratic political party getting down to business. Last month's two-day convention in Vijayawada of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao's phenomenally successful Telugu Desam party was a one-man affair, right from the moment the saffron-clad party leader unfurled the party flag on May 26 at the Siddhartha Academy—renamed Kakatiyanagar after an ancient line of kings—until the final mammoth public meeting he addressed on May 28. In between, Rama Rao got himself unanimously elected party president by the 1,200 delegates, received from reverential party members the right to appoint the party executive, and delivered a warning that indiscipline would be crushed.

In fact, the entire affair appeared to have been devised with a view to confirming the halo around Rama Rao. The resolution adopted by the delegates stated that Rama Rao should be president as he had made supreme sacrifices working for the success of the party and thanked him for restoring the self-respect of the Telugu people. The party constitution proudly displayed a picture of the film actor-turned-politician on the cover. In that context, Rama Rao's temporary residence in the heart of Kakatiyanagar, an ostentatiously simple hut named Telugu Kuteeram, seemed to mock humility rather than epitomise it.

Family Presence: Even as delegates flocked to the convention venue, passing under 14 arches commemorating eminent Telugus, the discordant notes were evident. During the election campaign, Rama Rao had stridently castigated Mrs Gandhi's inclinations towards family rule; but mingling with the delegates at a supposedly closed-door session were his wife, four sons—Jayakrishna, Mohana Krishna, Saikrishna and actor Balakrishna—and three of four daughters.

Elsewhere, Rama Rao's son-in-law, Dr M. Venkateswara Rao, who has been with the party right from the start, organised a conference of the party's youth wing, the Telugu Yuvata. Said Rao: "We are making a beginning. Our role as a front organisation of the party will be discussed and decided when enrolling of members is completed in all districts." The youth conference passed resolutions demanding a ban on horse racing, amusement parks, cabarets and all forms of gambling. It also demanded that the



Rama Rao and others at the Telugu Desam convention: carefully managed affair

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voting age be lowered from 21 to 18.

Besides these nepotic trends, other undercurrents disturbed the smooth flow of the convention. The split between the original members who joined the party before the elections and those who joined afterwards was reflected in the dissenting shouts that greeted the election of P. Upendra, one of Rama Rao's closest aides, as general secretary. Another talking point was the publication in the *Deccan Chronicle*—owned by Congress(I) MP Chandrashekhara Reddy—of the photocopy of a government order authorising Rama Rao's eldest son, Jayakrishna, to build two theatres on the site of the Ramakrishna Film Studios, until recently the headquarters of the party.

Jayakrishna's earlier request had been turned down in December 1980 as the change of the site from the special industrial zone to the light commercial zone violated land-use regulations. Apart from relaxing land laws, a fee related to the land has been reduced from Rs 20,000 to Rs 1,000.

Criticism: The convention understandably provoked disparaging remarks from the Opposition. Says veteran CPI-M leader P. Sundarayya: "There is no difference in the functioning of the Telugu Desam and the Congress(I). It is ignoring basic issues of the people and adopting cheap gimmicks. Unless it mends its ways it will meet the same fate as the Congress(I)." Rumblings are already being heard. A week after the convention, the party expelled B. Gopal, MLA, who alleged "political harassment" by Rama Rao's son-in-law Chandrababu Naidu.

The Telugu Desam Government's populist measures are now undergoing some modifications. Free midday meals will now be available only to government school-children from backward classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. From the academic year, sambar and rice will be fare, instead of the bun and milk that Rao had ordered on taking office. scheme to provide rice at Rs 2 a kg to fa earning less than Rs 6,000 a year is a trouble.

These and other problems can be round hard-headed administration, but Telugu Desam's inner party problems only be aggravated if Rama Rao persis putting his own stamp on the organisa with an iron hand. After all, in a set-up already boasts of 1,068,000 members a bracing to accommodate more—in fi so-called 'active' members are suppose enrol five members each—the polic 'Rama Rao is Telugu Desam and Te Desam is Rama Rao' can only lead the p down the road of self-destruction.

—AMARNATH K. M

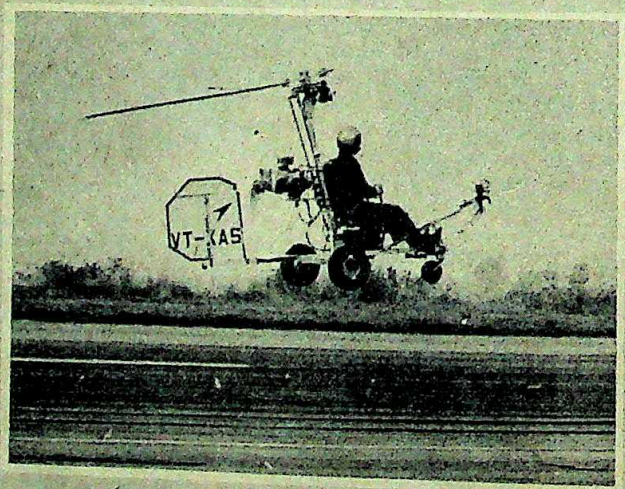
BANGALORE

High Hopes

TO WITNESSES on the ground, it must have seemed a rather comic sight: as rotors the size of telephone poles threshed the air, the pilot seemed to hang below, supported by nothing more substantial than an aluminium crate held together by nuts and bolts. But for the team from the Indian Institute of Science (IISC), Bangalore, that morning of May 16 was a time for jubilation—India's first gyrocopter was operational.

A cross between a helicopter and an aeroplane, a gyrocopter has a freewheeling rotor which emphasises its superficial resemblance to a helicopter and controls which are very similar to those of an aeroplane. The machine that Professor Rustom B. Damania's IISC team put through its paces—two short hops, take-offs with and against the wind, followed by level flight 5 ft above the runway—is essentially a modified version of the American Benson gyrocopter. It weighs a mere 136 kg—about one and a half times the weight of a motorcycle—and its air-cooled four-cylinder 90 horsepower McCulloch engine makes it as powerful as a big American car. It cost Rs 80,000 to build including the engine, which cost Rs 30,000.

The low cost and low fuel consumption make the gyrocopter an attractive proposition. It consumes 4 gallons of fuel an hour and at a cruising speed of 120 kmph, the kilometre cost works out to less than a rupee, which compares favourably with the Ambassador car's 60 paise per km rate. Another plus point is that its freewheeling rotor, supported by a small pre-rotator engine, helps cut the take-off run to 100 m, depending on the wind speed. According to Damania, in a 16 kmph wind it can "sit down like a duck".



The gyrocopter in flight: pioneering achievement

As a design, the gyrocopter is nothing new. "But putting even a simple concept into actual operation is very difficult," says Damania who recently joined the National Aeronautical Laboratory. With the vagaries of weather, and the delay in completing the formalities laid down by the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), which included getting an authorised pilot to test the aircraft, it took nearly three years, from 1980 to 1983, before the gyrocopter finally got into the air. Further tests relating to the maximum speed—now anticipated at between 160 kmph and 180 kmph—fuel consumption, endurance and so on will be conducted after the monsoon.

Versatile Machine: The possibilities of such a light and relatively cheap flying machine are obvious. Damania feels that the gyrocopter could be used by the army for surveillance, to direct artillery fire and generally improve communications. Helicopters are meant to replace the Krishak planes now used for this purpose, but the smallest helicopter costs Rs 40 lakh and the gyrocopter would be an inexpensive substitute. The machine could also serve as a training platform for the National Cadet Corps. Last but not the least, long-distance travellers could make good use of it if the DGCA issues a licence for commercial production and use.

Meanwhile, the Government Aeronautical Research and Development Board has shown interest. The DGCA has no 'gyrocopter' classification yet, but the government departments respond favourably, aviation buffs in India will get a real "high".

—MAYA CHAU

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attle Formation

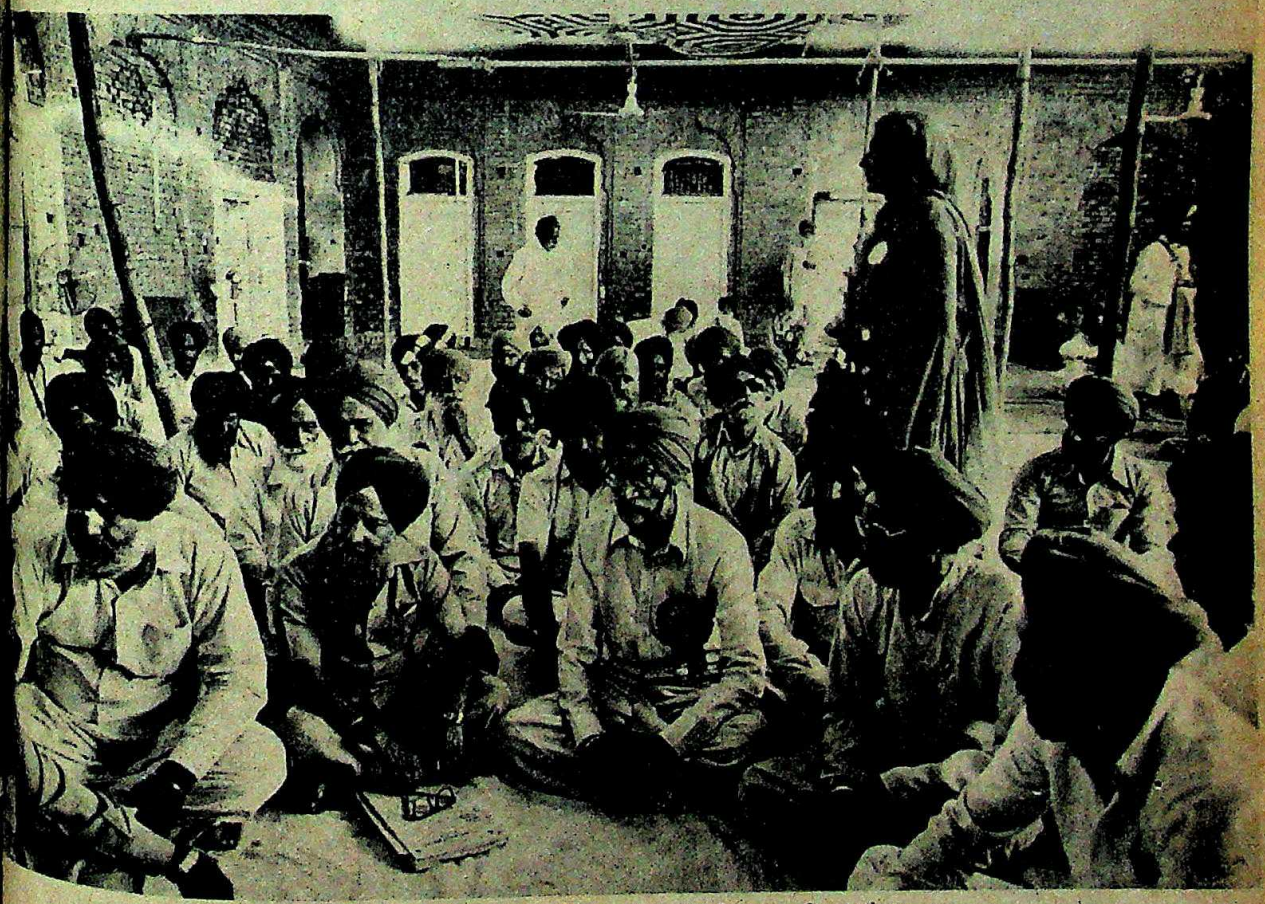
THE HISTORIC 300-year-old Anandgarh Fort, from where the 10th guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, had set out to challenge the might of the Mughals, reverberated to shouts of "Raj Khalsa!" last fortnight when over of the Akali Dal's one lakh-strong do- squad underwent a rigorous training mme. For 12 hours a day for four the *marjeeware*, as they are ominously called from seven states, learnt self- and defence against tear-gas. Frugal and scaring over-40 temperatures only ened the sense of impending sacrifice. ll the time, Akali leaders hammered the message: "Guru has called us to make supreme sacrifices for the undo the injustices of the modern Shrimati Indira Gandhi. We have to honourable place in Hindustan."

ushered into the fort to the boom of sewadars' guns, after a thorough search. "We have let no spy or renegade in," said one burly sewadar. The camp commander was Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee President Gurcharan Singh Tohra, and the *marjeeware* were addressed by, among others, former chief minister Prakash Singh Badal and member of Parliament Jagdev Singh Talwandi. Others included two former vice-chancellors of Punjab University, Patiala, Dr Bhagat Singh and Gursewak Singh, former Punjab Public Service Commission chairman Siani Lal Singh and retired Major General Jaswant Singh Bhullar. The volunteers were lectured on the "secular and humanitarian aspects of Sikhism as well as the Sikh military tradition".

Strategy: The training programme was obviously initiated with an eye to June 17, when the Akalis say they will launch the next phase of their agitation. Although there were the usual differences among the Akali leaders – Talwandi, for instance, had a brush with Tohra over the question of special status for the Sikhs—they got together with jathedars from various districts late at night to chalk out strategy. The salient points of this were:

- ► the *marjeewares* should spread the message in the farms that each farmer should sow only as much foodgrains as he needed, because the present unremunerative prices only add to losses. No surplus foodgrains should reach the Central pool;
- ► a boycott of foodgrains dealers on June 17, and stoppage of food specials moving out of the state;
- ► attempt should be made to buy unlicensed weapons;
- ► the preparation of a list of young volunteers for a 'Punjab Vahini';
- ► volunteers trained in weapon handling and self-defence should train others in villages;
- ► secret channels of communication should be maintained.

The Akalis decided not to impart arms training, on the advice of Bhullar and Major General Narinder Singh; said Bhullar: "We



Akali leaders at Anandgarh Fort: preparing for a confrontation

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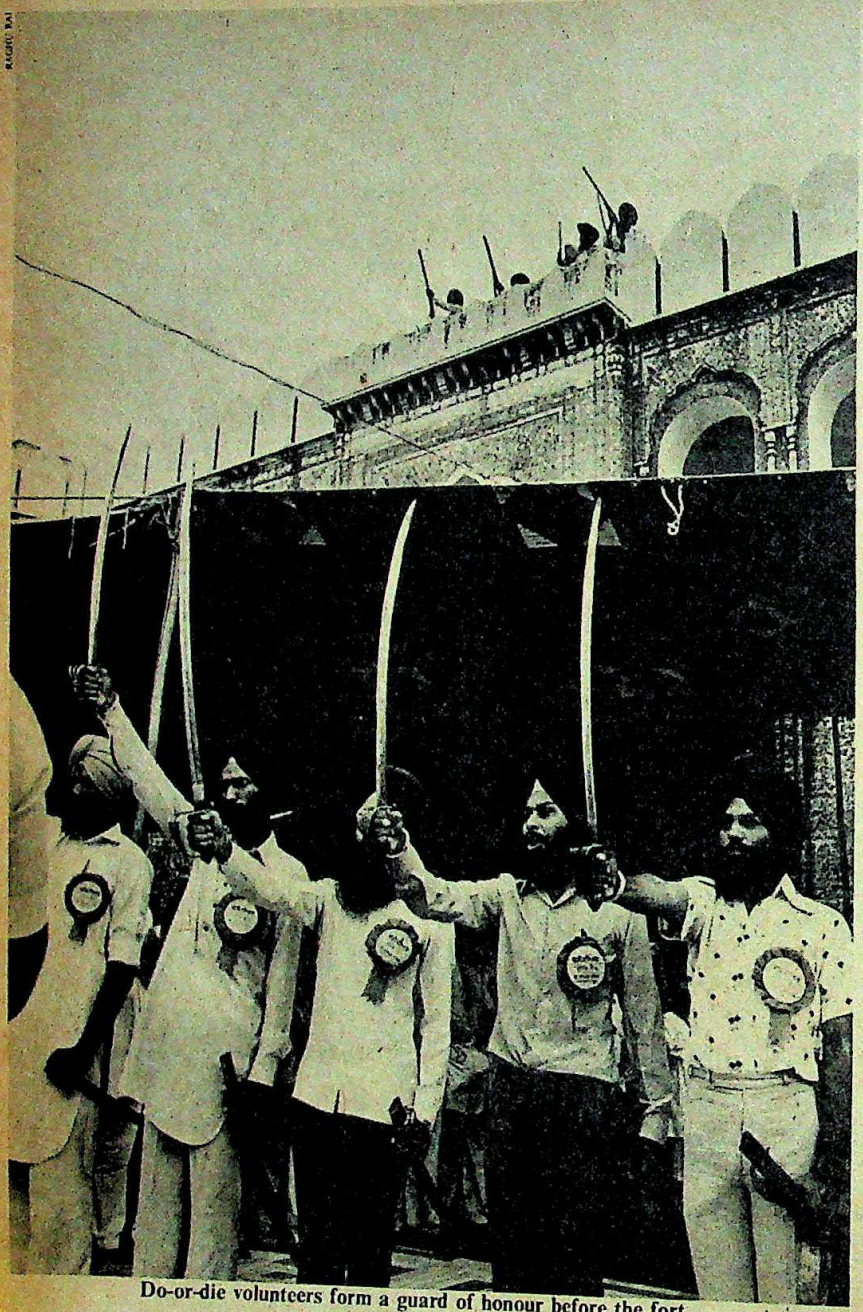

Do-or-die volunteers form a guard of honour before the fort

shall be inviting immediate government retaliation since arms training in groups is illegal." Bhullar, who joined the Akali fold after Haryana stopped Sikhs moving through to Delhi during the Asiad, added: "We cannot think of entering into an armed conflict with the Punjab Government or the Centre. It will only be suicidal. But Sikhs have always died like soldiers and we want to teach them that." This advice was useful in countering diehards such as Sukhjinder Singh, MLA, who said: "Mrs Gandhi does not bother about peaceful agitation. Assam is a pointer. Let us learn some lessons."

Disturbing Questions: Despite the fanatical devotion to the cause displayed by the volunteers, they did not hesitate to question their leaders. As soon as Badal finished a long speech on the Akali view of Punjab's economic development, a heckler said: "We are ready to fight to the finish but you seem to be trying to hoodwink us by some kind of secret parley with the Centre." Badal could only assert in reponse that the *dharamyuddha* would continue until demands "are accepted to the pa satisfaction".

The training programme at Anandgarh Fort took place against a ckground of continuing violence— more people were gunned down last tnight, three banks were looted, a derailed and the house of former A minister Balwant Singh bom Meanwhile, the ruling party organised lic meetings throughout the state as of their mass-contact programme— Gandhi addressed a few, chiding the Al for misleading "the brave and sim minded Sikhs and thus harming Punjab

A solution seemed as far away as althoughgovernment, opposition and A leaders wheeled in and out of various leys, and Union Home Minister P.C. S and Akali Dal chief Harchand S Longowal exchanged letters. Everyone appears to be waiting for June 17 when former agriculture minister Surjit S Barnala said, "We shall make more sacri if Mrs Gandhi so desires."

—GOBIND THUK

CONGRESS(I)

Morale Boosters

IT WAS a timely boost for the sagg morale of the Congress(I). In the la round of by-elections to state assemb and municipal and panchayat polls ruling party inflicted humiliating defeats its adversaries in Uttar Pradesh, Madh Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat and K nataka. Last fortnight, opposition attem in Rajasthan and West Bengal to gain sembly seats from the Congress(I) u thwarted. It substantially improved its co trol of municipal bodies in Madhya Prade Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Howe the Congress(I) suffered a significant defe in Bihar where the Janata Party wrested Chandi assembly seat by a satisfying marg (*see box*).

Earlier, the party had received a time reprieve when its candidates had won w comfortable margins in by-elections in K nataka—barring Ramakrishna Hegde's —Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (INDIA TODAY, June 15). Said a jubilant Rajen Kumari Bajpai, All India Congress C mittee(I) general secretary: "The round of elections have shown that our the only party which continues to enjoy inued support from the people. People's in Mrs Gandhi's leadership cannot

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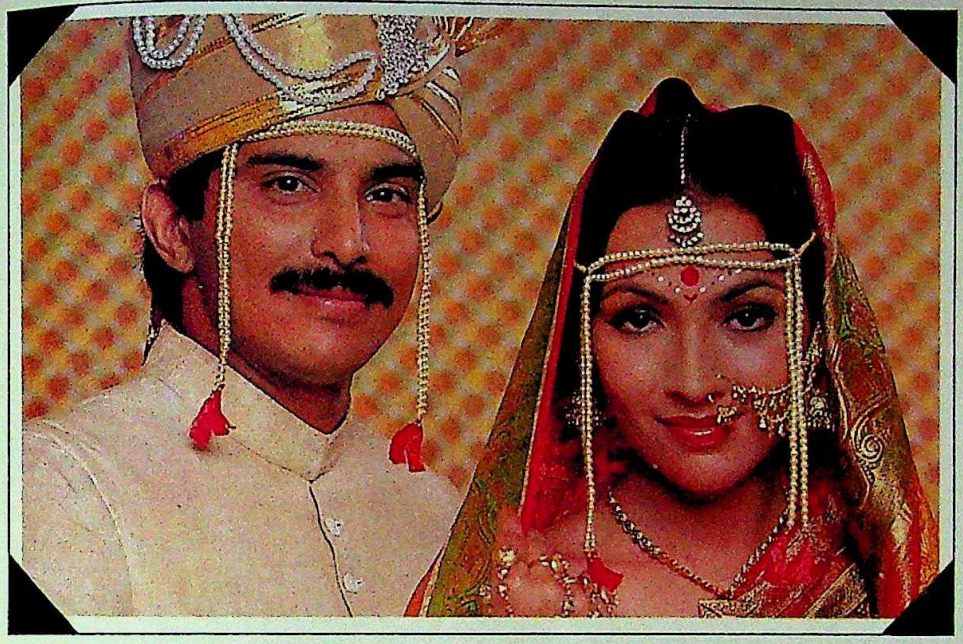

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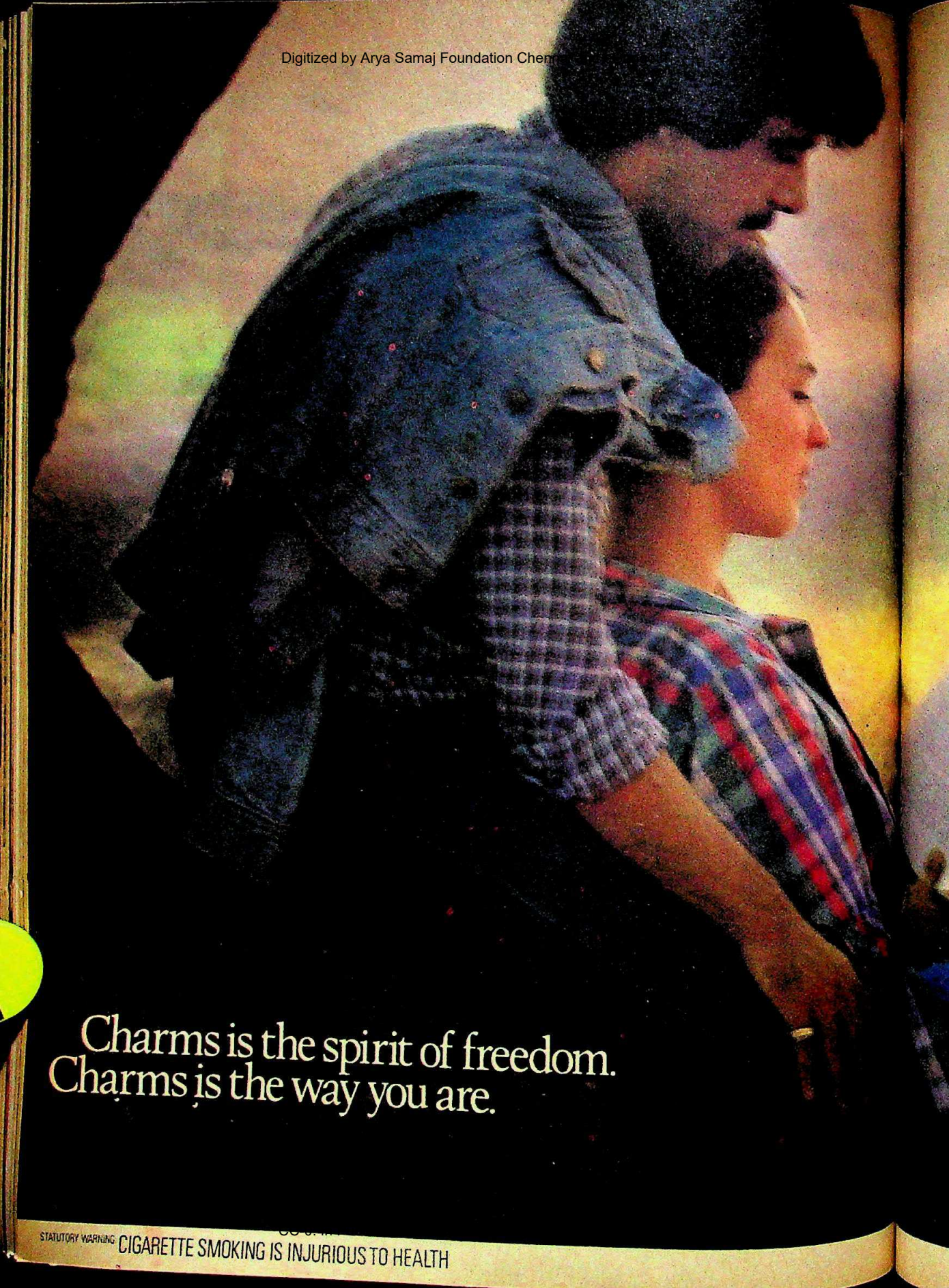

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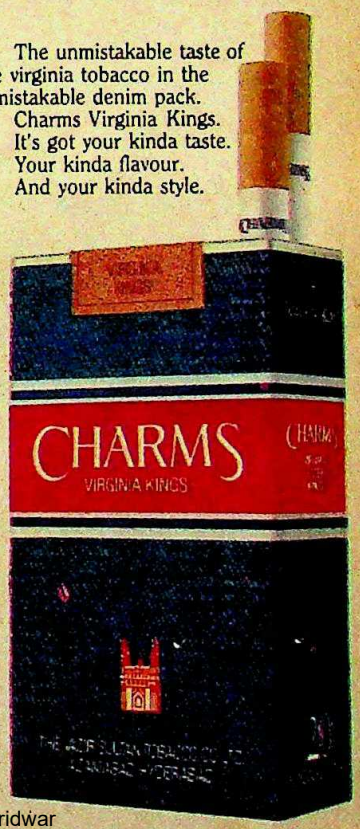

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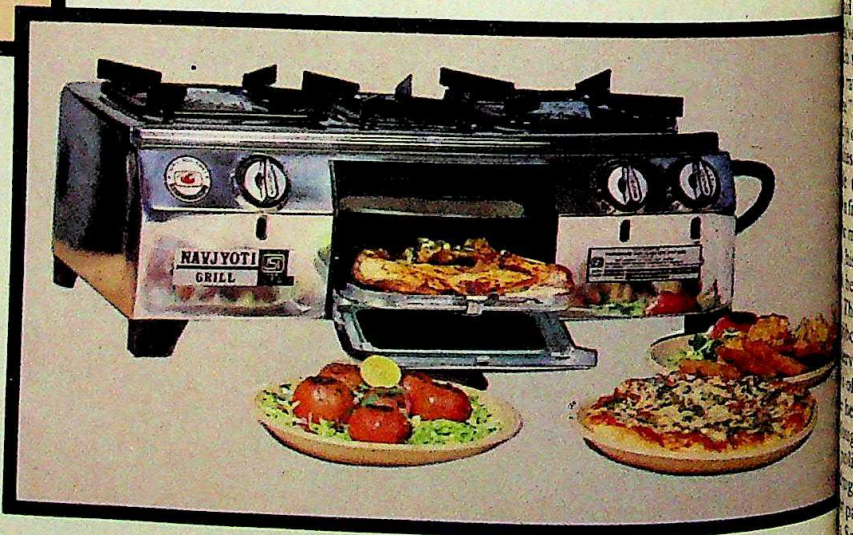

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by the cheap tactics adopted by the session."

Big Victory: Bajpai's assertion was quite off the mark. The Congress(I) won a decisive victory over the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Madhya Pradesh and the Lok Dal and Janata Party in Uttar Pradesh in the municipal elections. In Madhya Pradesh it bagged 58 of 103 municipal bodies leaving only 14 to the BJP. Of the five municipal corporations the Congress(I) won a majority in Sagar and Chhindwara was the single largest party in Burhanpur. By winning the Sagar Municipal Corporation, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Arjun Singh avenged the defeat which his party suffered last year, when the BJP had captured the Sagar parliamentary seat.

Arjun Singh: triumphant

The Congress(I)'s victory became more significant when it succeeded in eroding the BJP base in the Madhya Bharat region. Says Arjun Singh: "The elections have proved beyond doubt that the opposition parties cannot derive solace from periodic electoral reverses earlier. Municipal and panchayat elections reflect the opinion of the vast majority of rural and poor people. They have reposed their confidence in our party."

The BJP leaders, however, disputed the Congress(I)'s claim of a landslide victory. Veteran Lal Krishna Advani, BJP general secretary: "It is amazing that these results should be projected by the ruling party as a decisive victory. It is indeed a serious reverse and should call for some hard introspection rather than such flamboyant self-appreciation." Advani claimed that the BJP had actually doubled its strength in the 103 municipalities from 290 earlier to 515 at present while the Congress(I)'s share had come down from 1,145 to 775 now. Advani's arithmetic may be correct but the net outcome is that his party controls fewer local bodies than before.

The Congress(I) repeated its success in the neighbouring Uttar Pradesh. According to a conservative estimate it won 681 of the 896 seats of gram pramukh, elections for which were held on May 29. Since rural elections are fought on non-political basis the claim of the political parties cannot be verified. According to the official sources the share of the parties is: Lok Dal-103, BJP-41, Rashtriya Sanjay Manch-3, the remaining seats captured by the other opposition groups. In the hills too, the Congress(I) made impressive gains in the Marxist bastion of West Bengal where it won 30 per cent of the seats it contested in the panchayat elections. Said Michael Stephen, AICC(I) general secretary: "It is a big jump forward for us."

Eastern Success: The Congress(I) in West Bengal had the further satisfaction of winning the by-election in the Garden Reach assembly constituency and increasing its margin from a little over 400 votes last year to over 1,000 this time. In Jadavpur the winning CPI-M candidate, former finance minister Ashok Mitra, secured 8,000 votes less than the tally of last year's CPI-M victor, whose death had caused the by-election. The Congress(I) had never hoped to bag Jadavpur and its effort there was solely directed at reducing the Marxists' margin of victory. And in this it succeeded.

Mitra admitted that the party's support had decreased in the constituency, a Marxist bastion, and where the party had been increasing its margin with every election since 1972. Said Mitra: "While that is true, the fact remains that we got 63.9 per cent of the votes this time against 66.5 per cent last year which means that there has been a swing of around 3 per cent against us." Whatever the reason, the very high-powered CPI-M campaign to retain Jadavpur and, if possible, increase last year's margin of 33,000—a campaign conducted by several state committee members of the party and in which even film personalities participated—failed to yield the desired result.

In Rajasthan, however, the Congress(I) and the BJP retained their seats. While the Congress(I)'s Surma Ram won the Pindwara (ST) seat by defeating the BJP's Shoba Ram by 10,582 votes, the BJP's Radhey Shyam Bansiwal trounced his Congress(I) rival Kishan Lal by 4,346 votes in Dausa. Although BJP candidates won 6,500 more votes than they did in 1980, the party has not wrested any seat from the ruling party in the by-elections held since June 1980, despite growing corruption and maladministration in the state. Retorted Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, leader of the Opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly: "The reduced support for the Congress(I) in both assembly segments clearly reflects the people's disenchantment with it." But the elections in the northern belt in the last four weeks have proved conclusively that the electorate has not found any credible alternative to Mrs Gandhi.

—PRABHU CHAWLA with bureau reports

BIHAR

Lost Post

WHEN Harinarain Singh of the Janata Party defeated Anil Kumar of the Congress(I) by 7,840 votes in the Chandi assembly by-election last fortnight, opposition leaders were jubilant. Crowed Karpoori Thakur: "The victory is the beginning of the end of the corrupt empire of Dr Jagannath." The chief minister himself was uncharacteristically subdued and, in a post-election statement, said that "as a soldier of the Congress and a staunch follower of Mrs Gandhi" he was prepared to make any sacrifice for the party, a roundabout way of saying that he was ready to step down on this score.

Jagannath: subdued

Dr Jagannath's by-election record is impressive: out of 14 held before Chandi, the Congress(I) has won 12, losing one to the BJP and one to an independent. The Chandi loss has come as a considerable shock. Anil Kumar's father, the late Dr Ramraj Prasad Singh had polled about 50,000 votes in 1980, winning by a convincing 32,000 votes; this time the party's candidate polled only 21,000 votes. Opposition leaders feel that their candidate won because almost every party—except the BJP and the Lok Dal—was backing him. Another reason they cite is that because of CRPF contingents all over the place, electronic voting machines, and gazetted officers officiating as presiding officers, the ruling party could not capture booths or intimidate voters. But the basic reason for the Opposition's convincing victory, political observers say, is the fact that the backward classes and the upper castes united behind the Janata Party's candidate.

The chief minister's theory is that, because his government has prosecuted over 100 people from Chandi and neighbouring areas for their involvement in the Biharsharif riots and for atrocities on Harijans—the trials are still going on in special courts—the voters turned away from the candidate. A collective fine was imposed on some villages in the constituency and this, feels the chief minister, did its bit to alienate the voter. Whatever the Government's excuse or explanation for the defeat, the lesson for the Opposition is obvious. As a politician remarked in a time-worn but very relevant adage: "United we stand, divided we fall."

—FARZAND AHMED

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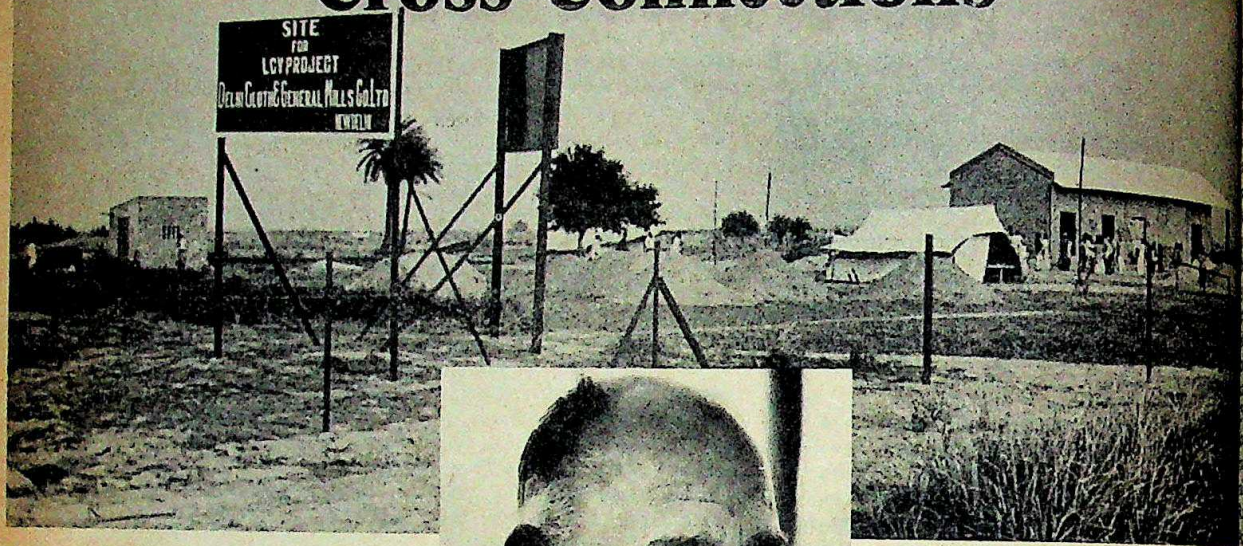
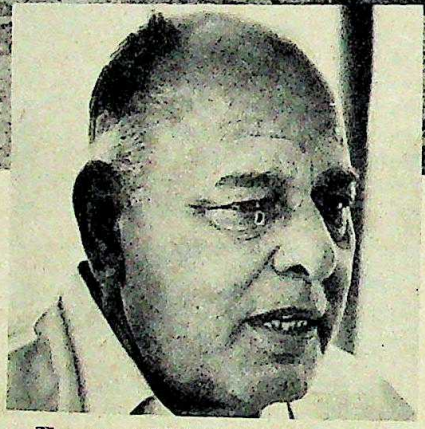
UTTAR PRADESH

Cross Connections





The proposed DCM site in Ghaziabad (top) and Sareen: political drama

LAST month, the Allahabad High Court quashed the acquisition by the Uttar Pradesh Government of over 275 acres of prime land in Ghaziabad district, and brought the curtain down on the first act of what has developed into a major political drama. Much of the drama stemmed no doubt from the fact that 80 acres in question are part of the 200-acre farm owned by A.P. Sareen, a close relative of the prime minister's Special Assistant R.K. Dhawan.

The land was allotted to Delhi Cloth Mills (DCM) which had requested the state Government to allot it 300 acres of land in Surajpur and Habibpur villages of the district—35 kms from Delhi—for the light commercial vehicle factory it had planned to set up in collaboration with Toyota of Japan. In its rush to industrialise, the state Government in 1981 authorised the Ghaziabad district collector to acquire land on an emergency basis. The land was acquired in 1981 and handed over to DCM in August 1982 at a concessional annual lease of Rs 6 lakh for a 200-acre piece of land.

On May 23, 1983, Justices R.M. Sahai and V.K. Malhotra quashed the acquisition on two counts: that there was no urgency to justify setting aside Section 5A of the Land Acquisition Act which requires a comprehensive inquiry into the land to be acquired, and sufficient time for objections; and that if the petitioners had been allowed to present their case DCM could have been allotted sufficient land without acquiring Sareen's land.

Rejecting the state's contention that, had it conducted an inquiry under Section 5A, the delay would have resulted in the loss of the contract, the court said: "Besides as alleged by the petitioners, it was not open to the DCM to withdraw their project from the state by themselves at their own sweet will ....The inference of urgency in the circumstances of this case, was clearly based upon the consideration of a non-existent reason....A decision arrived at by such a non-application of mind is clearly arbitrary and cannot be sustained."

Notifications: The judgement also stated: "In this situation, in particular, it may have been possible for the petitioners to convince the collector and the state Government that the land could be made available to the DCM for their project even by excluding their plots." In fact, according to information submitted by the state Government, "adjacent to the petitioner's land is a chunk of barren land belonging to the Gram Samaj, running into few thousand acres".

The tussle began with a notification in the state's gazette on August 25 and 26, 1981, that about 275 acres of land—including plots owned by Sareen and members of family—were being acquired through Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Corporation (UPSIDC). What later proved undoing was the clause exempting UP from Section 5A of the Act which provi for inquiry, and examination of objecti The order also brought into force Section by which possession may be taken within days.

UPSIDC followed this up on Septem 15 with an advertisement in the Hindi *Navbharat Times* stating that it had acqui over 254 acres of land in Habibpur village an automobile factory. Curiously, the adv tisement, signed by S.D. Sharma, land acq sition officer, Ghaziabad, called for obj tions to be filed the same day. It also said as the owners of the land were not resid of the village and their addresses were available with the district authorities, ear acquisition notices had been pasted on village school, panchayat and commun centre notice boards.

Sareen refused to take this lying do He made the rounds of politicians, me the then chief minister V.P. Singh and his binet colleagues. In Delhi he approach Union Agriculture Minister Rao Birend Singh. On September 29, 1981, Singh w to the chief minister: "It has been stated fertile agricultural land belonging to S Sareen recently developed by him at a co derable cost, is being acquired by the G vernment of Uttar Pradesh for industry reas several thousand acres of alkaline unproductive land is available in the vi

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acquisition. It may please be considered ether alternative inferior land can be ac- ed in place of the irrigated land of the ap- cant."

Letters Exchanged: When the agricultu- minister's letter cut no ice with the state se- riat, Sareen secured a letter from the ne minister's office addressed to Chief ister Sripat Misra. Signed by R.K. Dha- the letter dated September 11, 1982, ds: "I am enclosing a copy of the letter re- d by the prime minister from Shri A.P. en of Sareen Farm...regarding the ac- ition of the said farm....It is stated that concerned authorities have obtained bolic possession of the land in their re- ds, but without paying any compensa- n. The petitioner is being threatened with ible eviction which would involve de- ction of standing rice crops and about 000 trees planted on the said land. I uld be grateful if you kindly have the tter looked into and appropriate action en." According to a letter from Ammar vi, the state's public works minister on ril 7, 1982, to the then industry minister of state Niaz Hasan Khan: "Sareen Farm is e of the few farms of Uttar Pradesh which ve won laurels from the foreigners."

But the state Government turned a deaf to all pleas. Sareen's hopes were now ed on the court where he had filed suit September 30, 1981. His arguments were:

- that to establish an automobile indu- y, a special Central Government licence s necessary; UPSIDC has no such licence;
- that UPSIDC officials were apparently ng to help some licensee to obtain the d;
- that over 4,000 acres of infertile land ad- ent to his farm could have been acquired;
- that there was no industrial or urban n for the area.

Finally, the high court upheld Sareen's e. The verdict is a blow for DCM, already ind schedule by over a year in its Rs 50 re project. Sareen's affidavit had asked demolition of the project construction on disputed land. The court has granted an erim stay on the demolition until the te Government's special leave petition is ided by the Supreme Court in July 1983. hile no DCM official was available for com- nt, a state Government official said: "We ll fight it out in the Supreme Court."

The stage is set for act two, which is ely to feature a trial of strength in New lhi's corridors of power—for the judge- nt notes that the state Government may w Sareen to "file fresh objections and it conduct inquiry into them under Section before making fresh acquisition orders." ith well-connected people on both sides. e next stage of the struggle promises to be eresting.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

MADHYA PRADESH

Return To The Ravines

LATE last month, after 101 days in jail, dacoit Ghanshyam changed his mind. Having surrendered with more than a dozen of his men before Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Arjun Singh on February 12 in a well publicised ceremony at Bhind, Ghanshyam gave the slip to his police escort on May 24, to return to the ravines. Six policemen have been suspended; but the controversy is far from dead.

Indeed it has raised intriguing questions. According to the police, Ghanshyam and his brother, Karan Singh, were taken to Gudhajaitpura, a village in Bhind district, in connection with the recovery of some arms and ammunition. But few in Gwalior—even among the police—accept this explanation for Ghanshyam's presence in the village from which he escaped.

On May 23, the circle inspector of Behat in Gwalior district, S.D. Sharma, applied for police remand of the two brothers in the court of Special Judge M.P. Vajpayee. The reason given in the remand application was recovery of arms from Gudhajaitpura in a case of attempt to murder.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Ghanshyam at his surrender in February: mysterious escape

That evening Sharma took custody of the prisoners from Gwalior Central Jail and handed them over to Sub-Inspector Indradeo Chauhan, who had a head constable and four constables with him. Sharma's instructions were clear—the policemen were to accompany the dacoits to Gudhajaitpura where two of their nieces were to be married that night. The recovery of arms was only an excuse to take them there, since an earlier attempt to get them out on parole had failed. Ghanshyam and Karan were neither handcuffed nor roped.

After some delay, the group finally left in a police vehicle at half past seven, reaching Gudhajaitpura at 11 p.m. Gudhajaitpura, a large village of about 3,000, had often sheltered Ghanshyam's gang; now the villagers greeted his return by firing several rounds in the air. Ghanshyam's brother Vishnu had arranged his daughter's wedding in Gudhajaitpura knowing that the reception would be warm. The family actually belongs to Hanumangadhi in Uttar Pradesh's Jalaun district; but allegedly because of police harassment in the state, Vishnu chose to perform the ceremony in Madhya Pradesh.

The ceremony continued late into the night and Ghanshyam finally retired at 3 a.m. to the house of Sarpanch Shyam Saran Singh. He rose at nine and spent the morning bathing and visiting the local temple.

Neat Escape: In the afternoon, according to one of the policemen, Ghanshyam and Karan sat down with some of their relatives near the village school; Karan requested the policemen to move away so that they could discuss some private family matters. The discussion continued several hours. Then around six, Karan went to the nearby fields to relieve himself. Ghanshyam followed with three others at about half past seven—when it was already dark. That was the last the policemen saw of him.

Says Ayodhyanath Pathak, deputy inspector general of police (Gwalior range): "Even after 1972, when over 500 dacoits surrendered, we had 20 dacoits who escaped over the years. Half of them were killed and the others caught. But all of them were small time. This is the first time that a gang leader who surrendered has escaped. But we will get him."

Gwalior's controversial Superintendent of Police Rajendra Chaturvedi, who was instrumental in arranging the surrender of Ghanshyam as also Phoolan Devi and Malkhan Singh, stoutly maintains that arms recovery was the reason for the dacoits' visit to Gudhajaitpura. He argues: "That was the

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purpose, but Ghanshyam concealed the fact that his nieces were to be married there."

Police Harassment: According to Chaturvedi, Ghanshyam fled because, at the village, his relatives from Uttar Pradesh told him that though he had surrendered, the police continued to harass his family. This probably angered Ghanshyam who looked upon himself as the cause of his family's troubles. Chaturvedi says that over the months, following complaints from the dacoit brothers of their family's harassment, he had sent several messages to officials of the Uttar Pradesh Police. Chaturvedi claims that not one of them has been even acknowledged. Relations between the two state police forces have been strained since Phoolan's surrender in Madhya Pradesh. Chaturvedi in fact has a case pending of an alleged attempt to kidnap Phoolan's family from Jalaun district just before the surrender.

But Chaturvedi's contention on the purpose of the Gudhajaitpura visit is unconvincing. First, how was it that the police suddenly decided to search for arms on the day of the wedding? Second, why did the search take place after Ghanshyam had been in custody for 100 days? Third, is it a coincidence that the police remand came only after the parole application had been turned down? Fourth, and most important, if the remand was genuine, why, as any number of witnesses would testify, was no search whatsoever conducted at Gudhajaitpura?

Scapegoats: On the surface, the suspension of six accompanying policemen appears justified, but in fact they are beginning to look like scapegoats. As one of them bitterly remarked: "If we were permitted to treat them as common criminals, they would have never escaped. But we had to treat them as very important persons—we couldn't handcuff them, rope them, direct them or point our guns at them. So how could we prevent their running off?" Moreover, they knew it was not so much a remand as a parole and the police guard had been sent not so much to watch over the dacoits as to be part of a scheme in which their presence was only a farce. But since more senior heads could not roll, they had to go instead.

Police officials feel that Ghanshyam is probably hiding with three others, who had fled Gudhajaitpura with him, in Bhind district near the Uttar Pradesh border. Says J.M. Qureshi, additional inspector general (anti-dacoity): "Information about Ghanshyam's movement at this stage should not be as difficult as usual to come by. The gang is at the formative stage and people will not be so scared to speak." But having had a taste of jail life, Ghanshyam may not be in the mood to oblige the police so easily.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

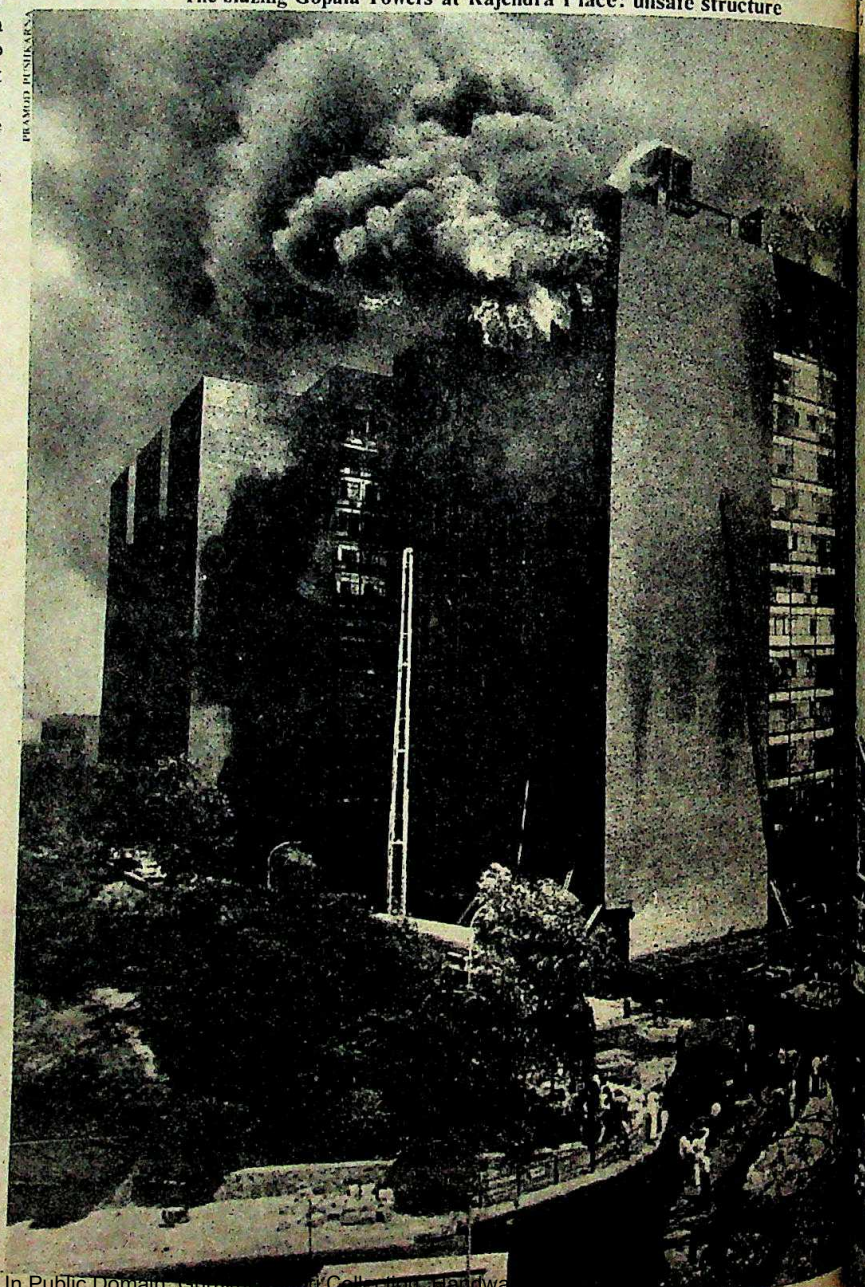
DELHI

Ordeal By Fire

IT SEEMED frighteningly close to the cinematic extravaganza *The Towering Inferno*. For the 400 people trapped atop the blazing 14-storey Gopala Towers, in the Rajendra Place Commercial Complex in West Delhi, it was a seven-hour wait of terror and anxiety. The horror magnified as hot summer winds added fuel to the raging fire, spewing thick black smoke which blanketed the sky.

The fire started around 11.30 a.m. and seven hours later, it was still smouldering. From the *prima facie* evidence available, the fire apparently started in one of the two basements from a welding rod. The wire of the welding rod was attached to the other basement which was stocked with oxygen cylinders. "That was illegal because the basement was meant for parking," said an employee of the building. The fire spread

The blazing Gopala Towers at Rajendra Place: unsafe structure



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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through the air-conditioning duct and very soon the entire building was wreathed in smoke. "I was examining a patient and as soon as I saw what had happened, I rushed out to get medical help," said Dr S.C. Arya who has an office in the building. "The fire started about two hours ago and there is just one mobile medical unit present here—they should have anticipated the enormity of the fire," he added.

Apparently, the first fire engine that arrived ran out of water very soon. By the time the other fire engines arrived, the situation had got out of hand. Some people escaped from the lower floors but many ran to the terrace for safety. Soon that too was engulfed in smoke as the flames leapt into the sky. Those trapped in the building threw notes pleading for help. "We will choke inside—please do something," said one such piece of paper.

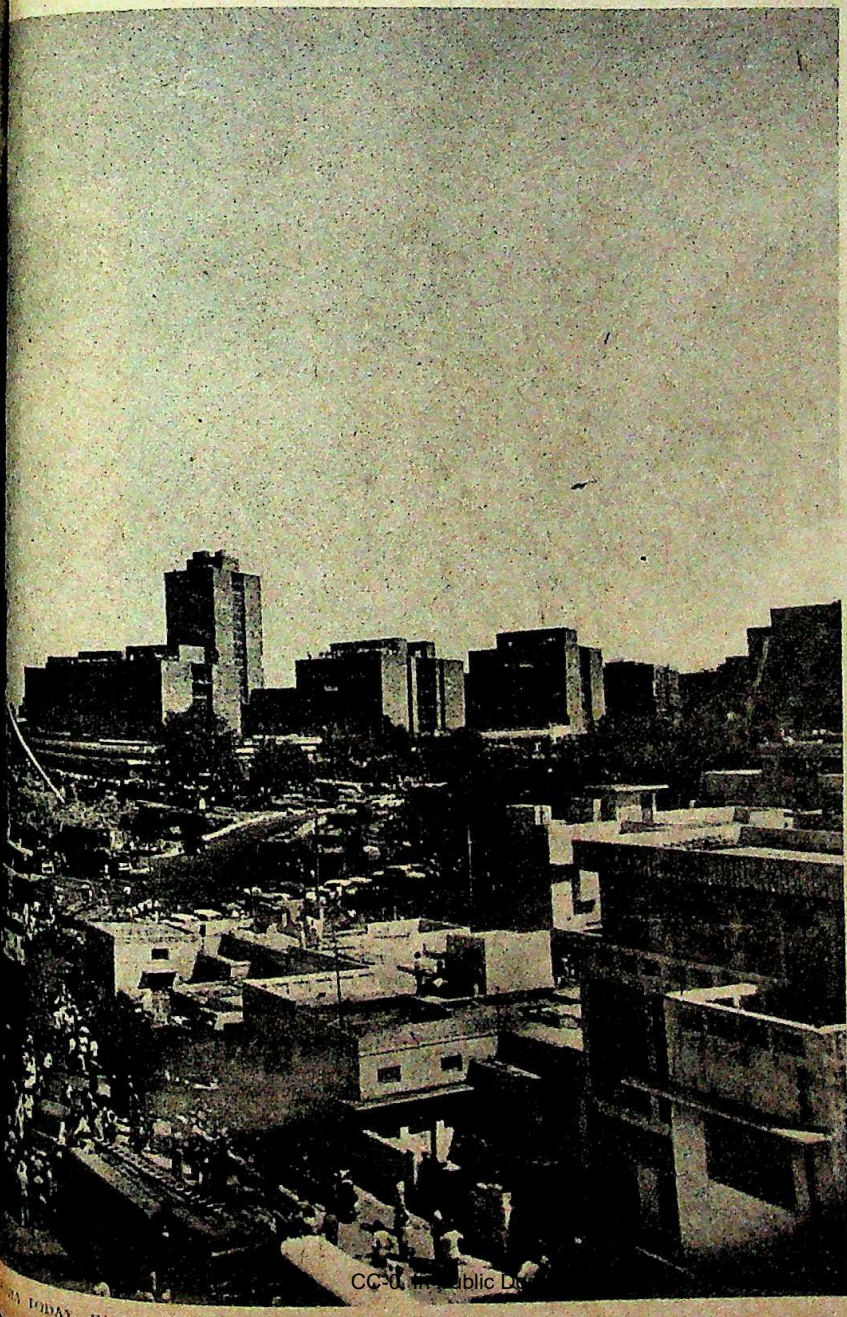
Losing Battle: As pandemonium broke loose, inefficiency reigned supreme. A fleet of fire engines and firemen from the Delhi Fire Service, the Railways and the International Airport Authority of India (IAAI) fought a losing battle because the water pumped up from the hose could not go beyond the fifth floor. Of the two Simon Snorkels that were brought in, one developed a mechanical defect. Two foam tenders from IAAI were also pressed into action but could not elevate their nozzles high enough and were unable to reach beyond the ninth floor. "Even though about 60 fire engines are standing here, we have not been able to control the fire—we do not have adequate equipment to deal with a situation like this," said S.S.L. Sharma, chief fire officer, Delhi. "This fire seems to have been the result of faulty construction."

The helicopters that were brought in could not land on top of the building because they fanned the flames as they came near. "These helicopters are there only for psychological satisfaction—they are of no use in a situation like this," said P.P. Srivastav, commissioner, Municipal Corporation, Delhi. "As far as I can see, this fire has resulted from an electrical short-circuit. These buildings have far too many air-conditioners and air-coolers and the load is just too much. One fireman died—everyone else has been rescued, but these buildings are dangerous," he added. Asked how permission was granted for such installations beyond the maximum capacity, Srivastav said: "When our inspectors visit these buildings, the owners switch off the extra machines and there is no way we can do anything—this is happening in almost all the commercial complexes in New Delhi." At one point it seemed like the entire building was going to collapse. A ladder thrown across to the next building served as a bridge.

Unsafe Buildings: However, what could not be smothered out was the barrage of questions and issues that emerged during and after the fire. Crucial among them were those that dealt with the need to revamp the fire-fighting apparatus in the capital and the need for ensuring that commercial buildings adhered to safety regulations. "When people began running toward the fire exit they found that it had been blocked with furniture," said Rajiv Gandhi, the general secretary of Congress(I), who had rushed to the scene of the fire.

Even before the smouldering stopped, Lt-Governor Jagmohan issued a series of ordinances. The fire services would be taken over by the Delhi Administration; teams would be deployed to inspect all buildings to check deviations from sanctioned plans; steps would also be taken to ensure that all such buildings adopt adequate safety measures against fires. A temporary embargo was to be placed on all buildings above seven storeys as the present fire-fighting equipment could not go beyond that height. Jagmohan also announced that Gopala Towers would be demolished. But that is a typical after-the-event reaction. What the Gopala Towers fire proved is that most commercial buildings in Delhi are a veritable fire-trap and unless strict action is taken, the occupants may not be as lucky next time.

—CHITRA SUBRAMANIAM



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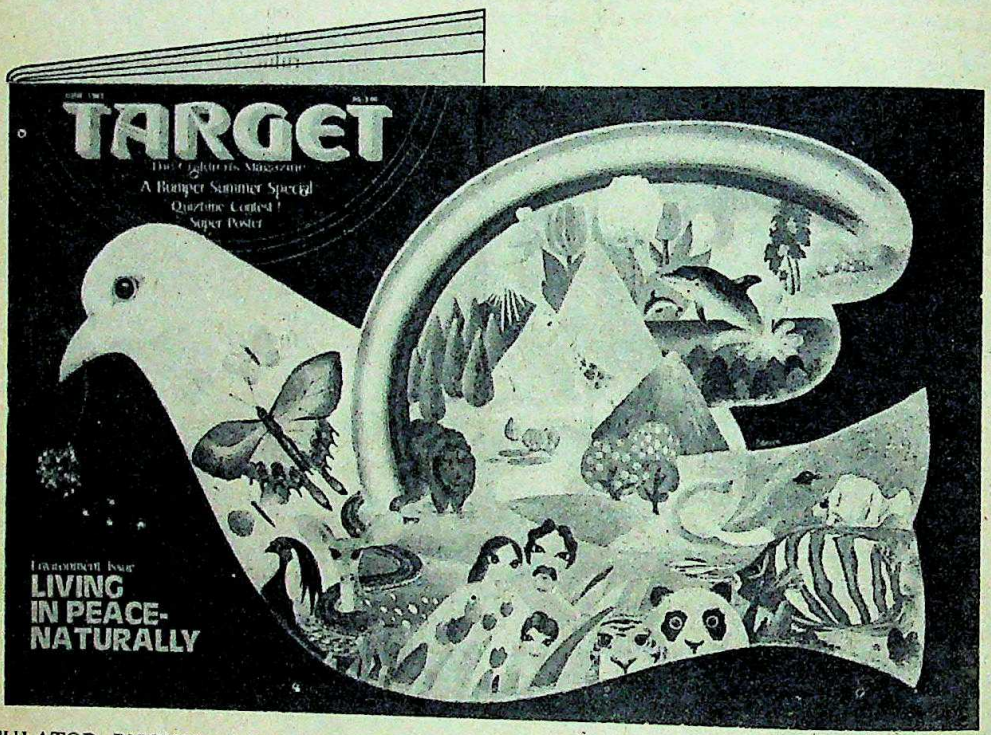

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Patil files his nomination papers: beset with problems

ARASHTRA

eadership Squabbles

EVEN before he had filed his nomination papers last fortnight, Chief Minister Vasantrao Patil of Maharashtra appears to have the July 3 Sangli assembly by-election all sewn up. At- by opposition parties to field a joint date fizzled out half way and the Janata , the BJP, the Congress(S) and the Pea- and Workers Party ended by announ- that they were backing out of the contest se the chief minister needed to devote s attention to the drought and not to gathering. Said Bombay Regional ress Committee(I) (BRCC-I) Presi- Murli Deora: "It is very magnanimous Opposition to step down but drought ely an alibi for the fact that they were e to muster up a common candidate." As it is, the only squeak from the Oppo- challenging Patil's claim to the seat so ngly vacated for him by wife Shalinitai will be a symbolic one with the CPI, the the Republican Party and labour Datta Samant backing the Lal Nishan 's Santaram Patil. Samant seems to be aging a bruised ego in view of the ng textile strike and Patil's utterances e was a latter-day Hitler.

Troubled Politics: However, Sangli is of the few calm spots in the turbulent sea ongress(I) politics in Maharashtra. A indication of the state of affairs was the leadership's inability to agree on Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (MPCC-I) office-bearers. Patil wanted a senior executive post for wife Shalinitai while MPCC(I) President S.M.I. Aseer wanted Deputy Chief Minister Ramrao Adik's brother Gobindrao to get a top post. As usual, with no agreement reached the decision has been left to Mrs Gandhi after her return from abroad. With no MPCC(I) executive it was left to the BRCC(I) to organise a chaotic workers conference of the party in Bombay.

Further embarrassment came in the form of former chief minister Babasaheb Bhosale who proposed holding a meeting of "loyalist" legislators to discuss the 20-point programme. He claims a following of over 100 MLA's, calls himself a "third force" to counter the other power centres of Patil and Adik and continues to hammer home his theme that loyalists are being sidelined by opportunists and newcomers. According to him, loyalists are those who stuck with Mrs Gandhi through her most difficult times in 1978, newcomers those who joined the Congress(I) when a return to power seemed possible in 1979 and opportunists those who joined the party only after Mrs Gandhi regained power.

One of Bhosale's main grouses is the way his successor Patil is removing his loyalist nominees from various state corporations—such as the Tourism Corporation, the Overseas Employment Corporation and the Konkan Development Corporation—and installing his own people instead. Aseer's recent pronouncements as transport minister calling for dissolution of the state transport corporation occasioned Bhosale to remark that it was time Aseer decided whether he wanted to be a minister or MPCC(I) president: he couldn't be both.

Fresh Campaign: While the three groups take knocks at each other a fourth is quietly gaining ground. Former deputy chief minister N.R. Tirpude is not a loyalist, newcomer or opportunist as he is that rare commodity who quit the party after 1980 but has since rejoined. Tirpude has been touring his home region of Vidarbha and started off by saying, "I crave for no power and let the ruling triumvirate of Dada, Adik and Aseer work peacefully and sleep peacefully." But in the same breath he has started talking of western Maharashtra with its political clout colonising the other deprived regions such as Vidarbha, Konkan and Marathwada. With both Patil and Adik from western Maharashtra and Vidarbha feeling neglected Tirpude's remarks are falling on fertile ground. But Aseer is perhaps the most realistic when he remarks: "There are no three and four forces in Maharashtra; there is only one Mrs Gandhi."

The leadership squabbles are reflected in growing restlessness among the followers. Last month Bhosale complained that the Congress(I) headquarters in his home village in Satara was attacked by supporters of the chief minister. In a counter-charge some Patil supporters complained that Bhosale's family was terrorising residents in his home town. Last week Adik faced noisy demonstrations by party workers when he addressed a Vidarbha Regional Congress Committee(I) meeting though he insisted on calling them pro-Maneka elements. In Bombay a meeting organised by the Bombay Citizens Committee for Peace and Non-alignment which Aseer was addressing adjourned abruptly when disgruntled textile workers started throwing stones. A Congress(I) MLA attending the meeting was injured in the melee.

The youth in the party seemed to be taking a cue from their elders. Munaf Hakim, an expelled Youth Congress(I) member who claims to have the support of the former unit president N. Chaulkar, held a noisy and crowded meeting of rebels in Bombay where he levelled allegations against Bombay unit president Madhukant Shukla. Shukla rushed back from campaigning in Srinagar for the assembly elections to counter his attackers. With that amount of hot words and bad blood around, Patil's victory in the Sangli by-election may go almost unnoticed.

—COOMI KAPOOR

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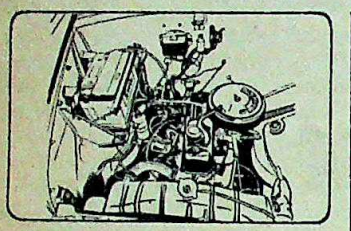

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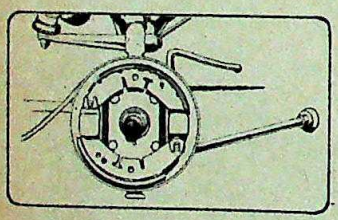

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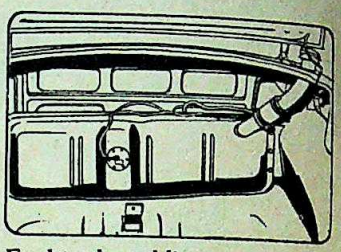

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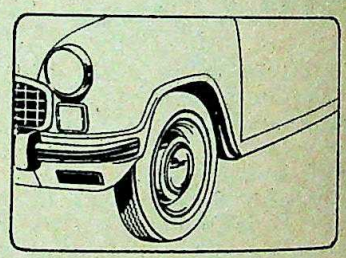

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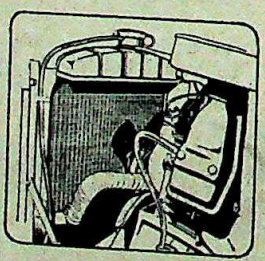

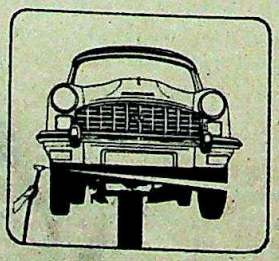

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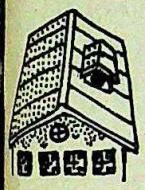

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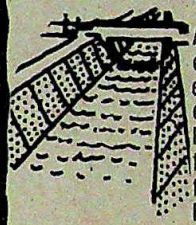

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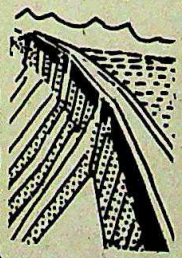

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TAMIL NADU

Pressure Tactics

HAVING succeeded in its battle against Dr Jagannath's infamous Press Bill, the press faced a fresh assault last month—from yet another righteous chief minister crusading against "scurrility". "The press law will not be repealed, and will stay. The law is a must, and is only a shield from the weapon of the press to protect people from slander," announced M.G. Ramachandran, chief minister of Tamil Nadu, at a well-attended press conference on May 27. Passed by the legislature in early 1982, the Anti-Scurrility Act, which has been challenged before the Supreme Court, seeks to make the "publication of grossly indecent or scurrilous matter, or matter intended for blackmail" cognisable and non-bailable, and to increase the punishment for those convicted.

What is particularly galling about MGR's statement is that he has completely sidelined the review committee set up by his government in September 1982. The committee, composed of seven ministers and officials and nine pressmen, was to make necessary recommendations "to provide a suitable environment in which newspapers and periodicals can discharge their legitimate functions properly and without fear", while also ensuring that the "Government could effectively control publication of grossly indecent or scurrilous matter or matter intended for blackmail".

Protest Letter: For three days after the announcement, committee members kept quiet. Finally, on May 31, five members, T.R. Ramaswamy, editor of the pro-AIADMK Tamil eveninger *Makkal Kual* and of the English evening daily *News Today*, R. Krishnamurthy, editor of the Tamil daily *Dina Malar*, V.G. Prasad Rao, special correspondent of *The Times of India*, C.S. Jayaram, special correspondent of *The Hindustan Times*, and United News of India reporter G. Chandrashekhar, wrote to the committee's chairman, Information Minister R.M. Veerappan, saying they were "perturbed by the recent reported statement of the Tamil Nadu chief minister that the state Government is not prepared to repeal" the anti-scurrility law. Ironically, at least two of the five had themselves reported the statement. "If this position is correct, we would not like to continue as members of the high-power committee," the letter adds.

The next day, two of the five signatories, Jayaram and Chandrashekhar, followed through with a joint resignation. But, apart from this, there appears to be no sign of any significant protest against the controversial statement from the apathetic journalists of Tamil Nadu.

What surprised newsmen in the rest of the country was the stoic passivity with which the chief minister's brash statement on a matter that is sub judice—apart from being under the purview of the committee—was

MGR (left) and Information Minister Veerappan: retaining the draconian Anti-Scurrility Act

received by the reporters and special correspondents of leading national newepapers and news agencies, who dutifully took down his statement at the press conference without a murmur of protest.

Responding to this, R.T. Sambandam, chief of the *Indian Express* news bureau averred: "We want to demonstrate our independent critical attitude by our investigative reports rather than philosophical pronouncements." "How could we have continued to pose critical questions about the press act to MGR in the press conference? Many AIADMK party members and workers were around, and one simply could not have tried to cross-examine the chief minister," reasoned N. Narasimhan, *Hindu* correspondent.

Writ Petition: The fate of the Act hinges on the verdict of the Supreme Court, which is considering writ petitions questioning the constitutional validity of the Act, filed by a number of Tamil dailies and by Sastri Ramachandran, secretary of the state unit of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, who is a special correspondent for *Deccan Herald*. The court has stayed operation of Section 292-A of the Indian Penal Code, which deals with "the publication of grossly indecent or scurrilous matter". The writ filed by Sastri Ramachandran has also sought an interim stay on the functioning of the review committee. But the state Government has yet to reply to the notices issued by the Supreme Court on the writ petitions. Moreover, as the matter is sub judice, Veerappan is cl convening any more meetings after th and only meeting on October 30, 198

In the absence of a functional revie paratus or any firm opposition fro journalists in the state, MGR evidentl free to enforce his will on the press. R ding to a suggestion that complaints o cent or scurrilous journalism should be red to the Press Council, he said: "The Council takes its own time in dealing cases, and delay is inevitable. What happen to our prestige meanwhile?"

Some journalists feel understand bitter about the lack of response among of the state's journalists. C.P. Sesh assistant editor of *Indian Express* dras, a journalist of 46 years' stan comments: "Journalists here are m men of straw. They can't stand u anything, they can't fight for anyt By and large, they tend to religi take down what someone or the n says and faithfully report it verba

Saeed Naqvi, editor of the thern editions of the *Indian Ex* stated the case succinctly: "MGR even get away with daylight mu For one thing, journalists here are gely quiescent. And for another an press law movement here will assume national proportions as it di Bihar because politicians and journalis the rest of the country simply do not green pastures in a state where a Congr government is not in power."

—S.H. VENKATRA

WEST BENGAL

Hollow Victory

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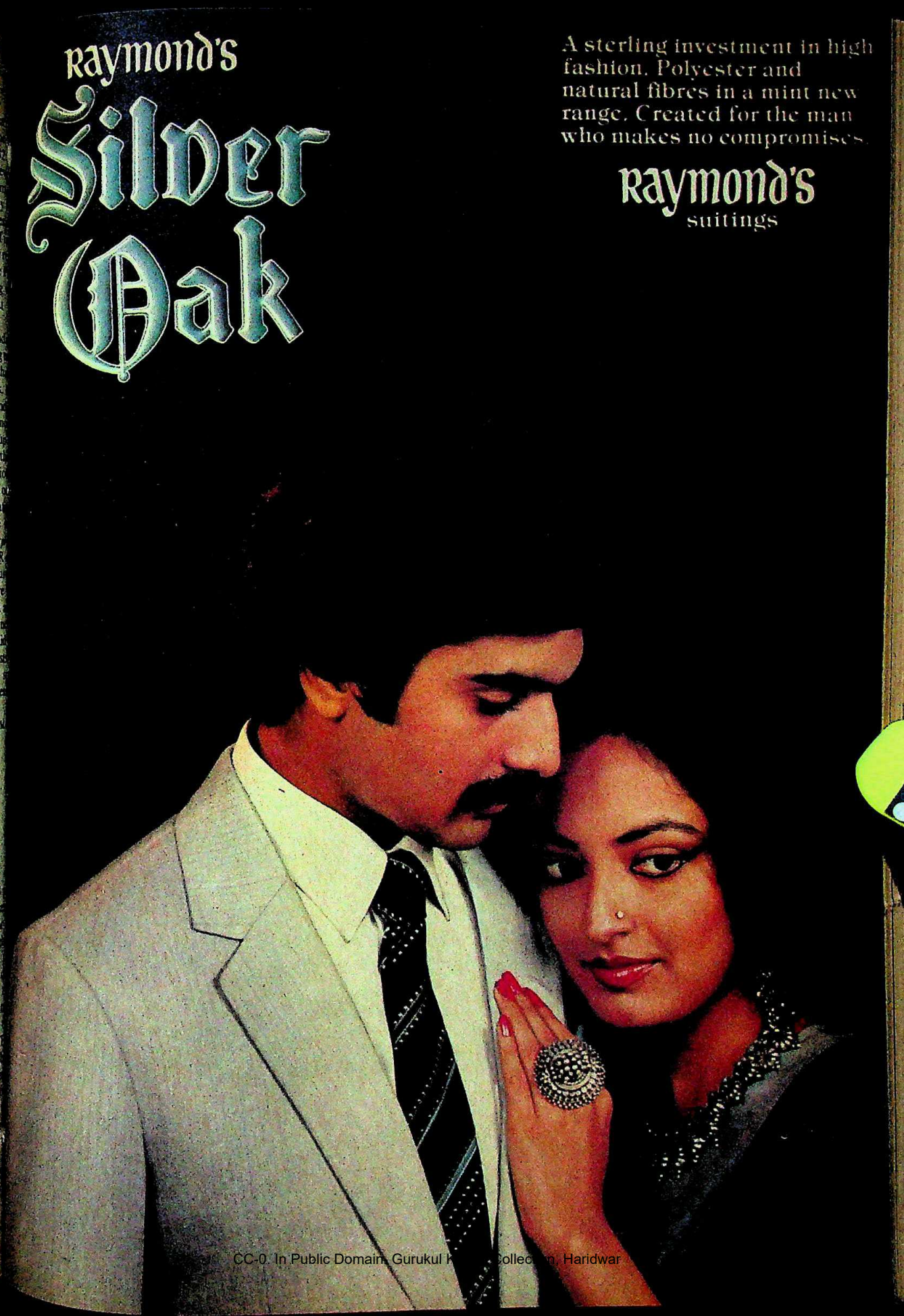

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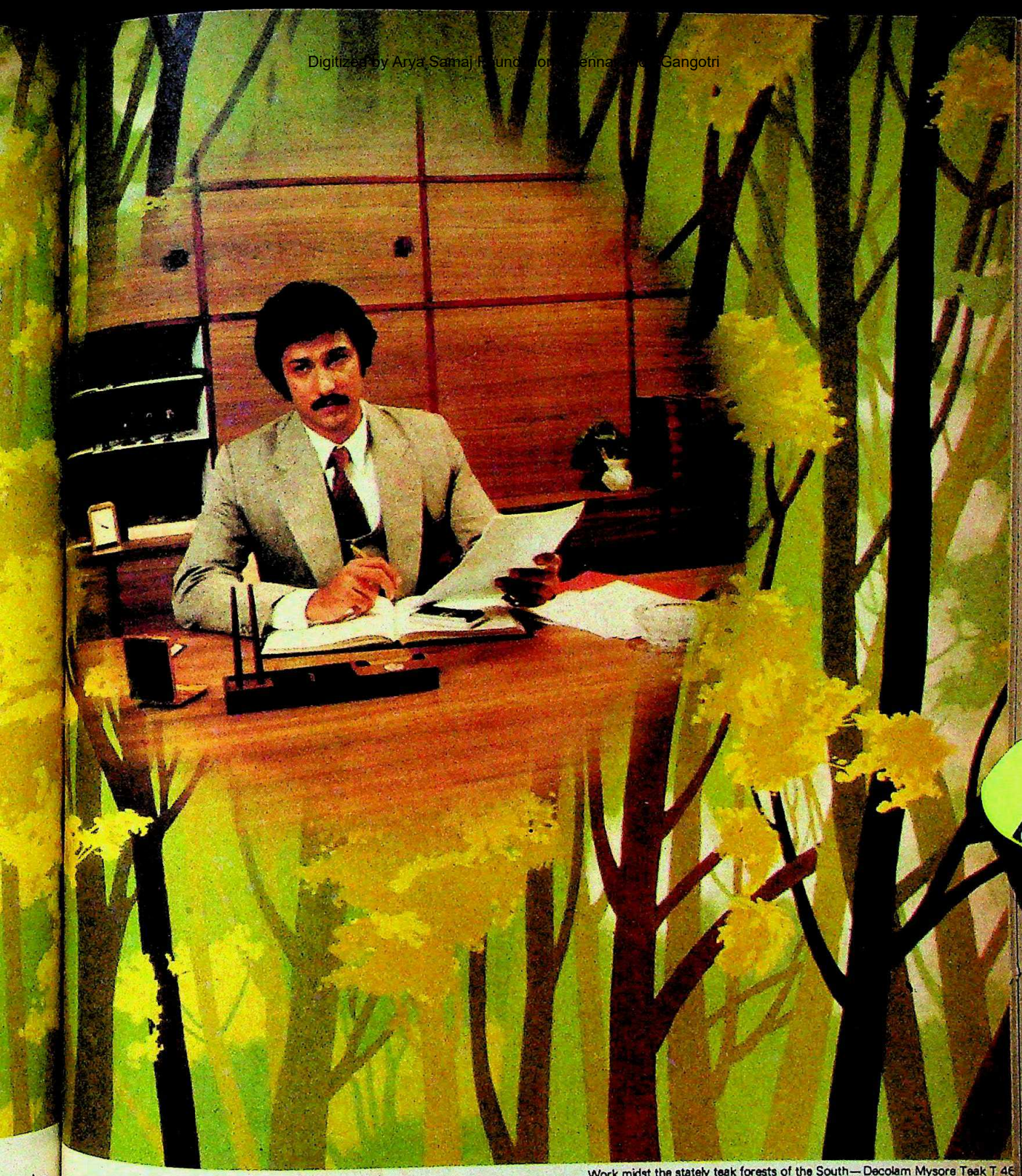

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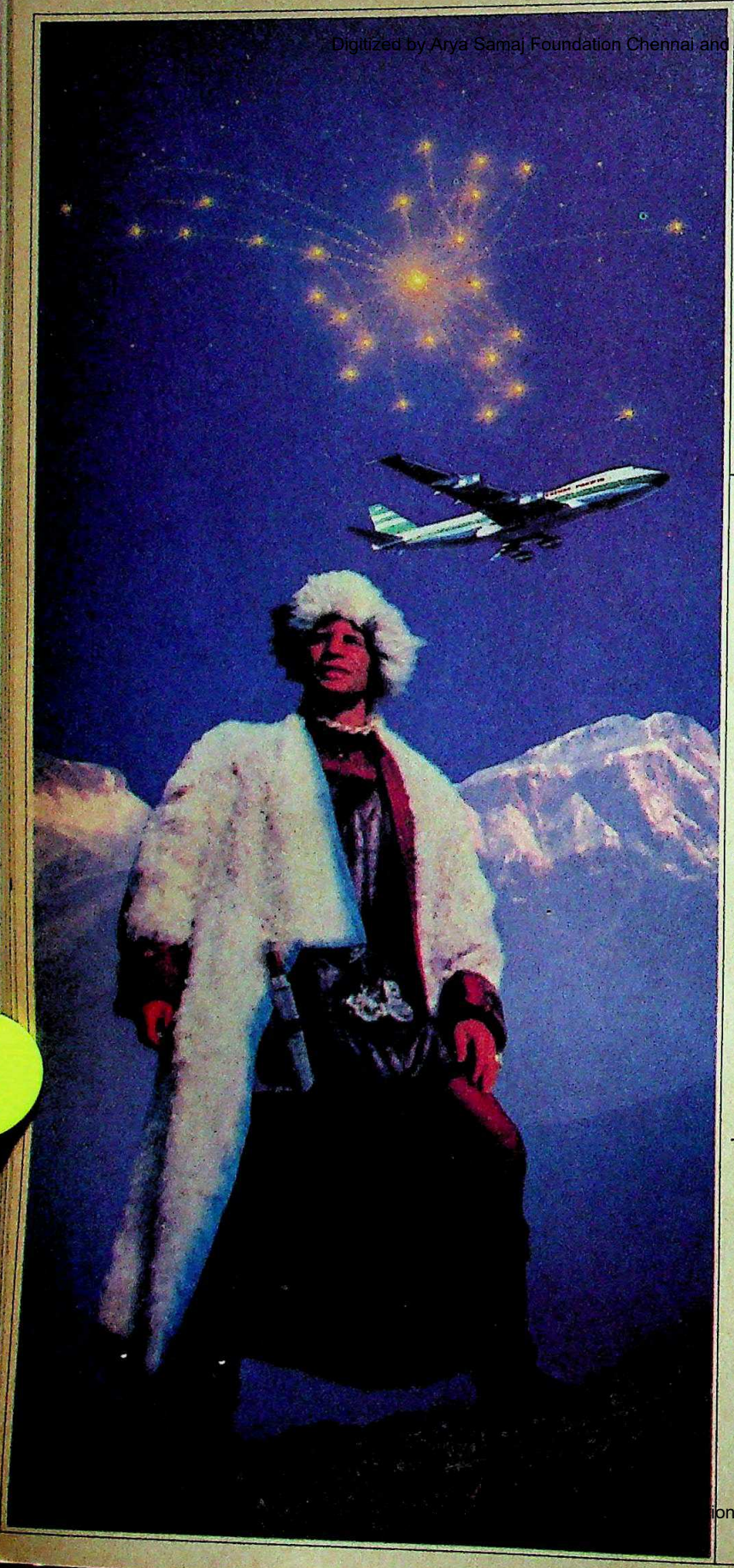

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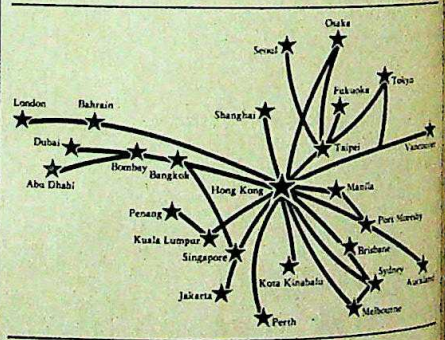

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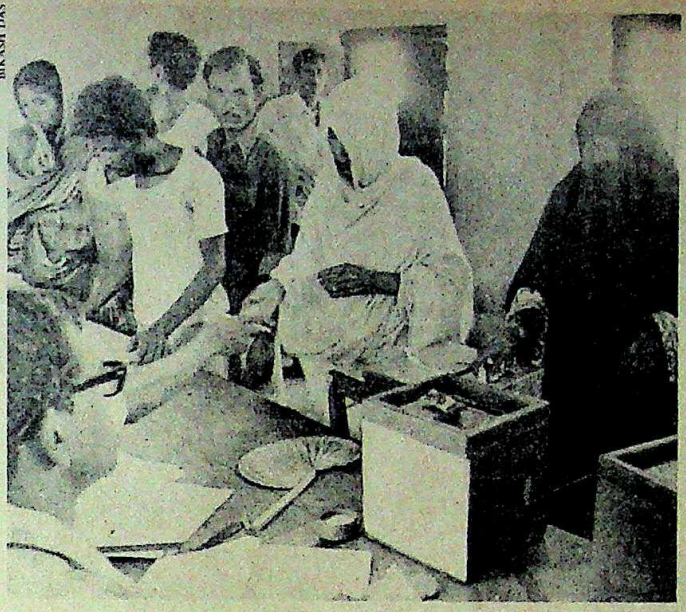
merged as a strong force in countryside. The Cong-'s resurgence took place me when Left Front itself from cohesive with the er constituents, like For- Bloc, Revolutionary ist Party (RSP) and Com- st Party of India, up in against the CPI-M.

Split Votes: The leaders of parties say that the Con- (I) would not have won so seats had the Marxists ac- to their "legitimate de- s" for seats which then have ensured that leftist were not split. They ained that left unity have to be restored and biggest leftist party the ative for this should come the CPI-M.

The Marxist response was sharp rejoinder from General retary E.M.S. Namboodiri- who told a press conference lcutta: "Despite all out ef- made by our party, left could not be maintained the elections because of the other constituents to their unrealistic de- s." There was apparent ation in Marxist circles as results clearly established parties like the Forward Bloc and RSP getting a drubbing even in their strong-

A classic instance was Cooch Behar di- in north Bengal. In the last election, rward Bloc with 12 seats controlled the mber zilla parishad, with the remai- 10 seats going to the CPI-M. This time, 12 seats, the CPI-M has gained control of arishad with the Forward Bloc, always rged as the major force in the district, g gained hold of a measly three seats. wo front constituents had fought bitter- the district and as the results came out, a ist supporter said: "Now we hope For- Bloc leaders will realise what we have all along trying to convince them: that support no longer existed."

What seemed to be forgotten was that Congress(I) managed to secure three in the parishad where previously it had e. Similarly, the Congress(I) secured 632 panchayat seats against the 246 won years ago, and the gain stands out in contrast to the fact that the CPI-M secu- 735 seats against 777 seats last time and Forward Bloc had to be content with 340 against 529 bagged in 1978. Thus, even gh the CPI-M has emerged as the major



BIKASH DAS

Voters at a booth and (left) Namboodiripad: left disunity

force in the district, its strongest opponent is no more the fraternal Forward Bloc but the Congress(I), a deadly foe.

Divided Control: If the CPI-M was able to wrest Cooch Behar from the Forward Bloc, in the three adjacent districts of West Dinajpur, Malda and Murshidabad, control of the zilla parishad, the apex body of the three-tier panchayat system, passed from its hands to that of the Congress(I). With the Gorkha League retaining its control over the Darjeeling zilla parishad, the Left Front lost four of the 15 zilla parishads, a clear loss of three.

The zilla parishads control the entire functioning of the panchayats in the districts and this will lead to serious difficulties in West Dinajpur, Malda and Murshidabad where the front constituents together dominate the gram panchayats at the base levels and panchayat samitis at the sub-divisional levels but will have to take orders from the Congress(I) which will be in charge of the zilla parishads. A similar situation had cropped up in 1978 when the Gorkha League had emerged as the strongest force in Darjeeling and the Marxists promptly vested the Hill Development Council with greater authority thereby reducing the elected parishad to second class status. But that is not feasible this time.

The Marxists also fear that parties like Forward Bloc and RSP may covertly side with the Congress(I) in West Dinajpur, malda and Murshidabad. Said Sourin Bhattacharya, MP and RSP leader: "The bitterness between front constituents at the village level has reached a new peak and will take a lot of time and patience to be removed." With the post-election days bringing in reports of clashes between all parties, the day of reconciliation seemed a long way away.

To what extent relationships have been soured even at the top became evident last fortnight through reactions to a statement made by front chairman and Marxist leader Saroj Mukherjee, who expressed his "sadness" at the poor performance by the constituent parties. Said Sourin Bhattacharya: "This looks like a man condoling the death of a person whom he has murdered." Ashoke Ghosh of Forward Bloc pointed out that the Marxists themselves had also lost about 4,000 gram panchayat seats; what appeared lost on the smaller parties was the fact that the Marxists had contested about 2,000 seats less this time and even with its losses has emerged as the principal force in the state.

Opposition Strength: For its part, the Congress(I) is far from happy despite its substantial gains. As party President Ananda Gopal Mukherjee said: "We had hoped to do much better because of the infighting in the Left Front and also the fact that we ourselves were a more united force this time." In 1978 the combined opposition strength in gram panchayats was around 14,000 and there has only been a marginal increase. Admittedly, the Congress(I) has secured almost all the non-left votes but opposition to the leftists remains stuck to the traditional 30 per cent to 35 per cent of the electorate. The voting pattern has belied the Congress(I)'s strident assertions that there is large-scale disillusionment in the rural areas with the Marxists.

CPI-M leader Saroj Mukherjee admitted that a "process of polarisation" has started. But he hastened to add that the need for leftist unity was still very much alive, a clear appreciation of the fact that the Marxists were still not strong enough to take on singly both the Congress(I) and other leftist parties and groups. The elections left the West Bengal countryside burning: within four days of the polls, five lives were lost in inter-party clashes. Chief Minister Jyoti Basu issued urgent instructions to district authorities to remain vigilant. The Home Department asked the district police not to release the additional forces sent to them from Calcutta. It distinctly appears it will be a strife-torn summer this year.

—SUMANTA SEN

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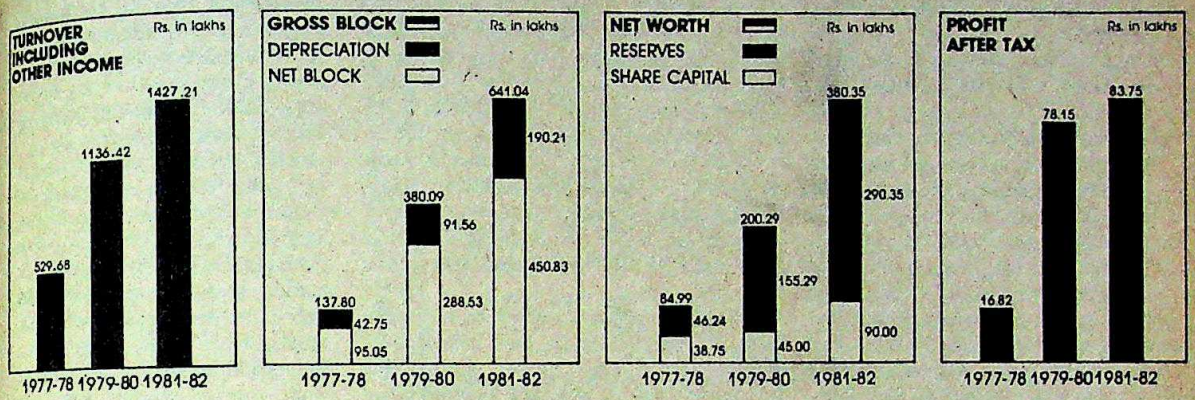

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MORARJI DESAI

The Hersh Heresy

It is this faith (in God) that enables me to be at peace with myself in the midst of worldly storms.

—*Morarji Desai in his autobiography,* The Story Of My Life (Volume III)

FOR FORMER prime minister Morarji Desai, what he required most last fortnight was not just faith in God but the faith of his fellow countrymen as he was buffeted by the biggest "worldly storm" of his 53-year political career. Desai has been accused of many things in his long and austere innings but nothing could have prepared him for the stunning allegation that he was a CIA agent. The allegation, made by prominent American journalist Seymour M. Hersh in his recently-published book *The Price of Power*, states that Desai was paid $20,000 (Rs 1.6 lakh at prevailing exchange rates which was around Rs 8 to the dollar in the late 60's, the period Hersh claims Desai was supplying information) a year to feed vital information to the CIA and that this was a "long-standing arrangement".

Desai's immediate reaction was typical of the man. In his initial outburst, the former prime minister described the charge as "sheer madness", adding, "If I were in the USA, I would have sued him for a million dollars to teach him a lesson. Can I be bought? Has anyone tried to do so earlier? Why did he not write it during Johnson's time?" Subsequently, however, Desai refused to comment and has since treated the charge with contempt.

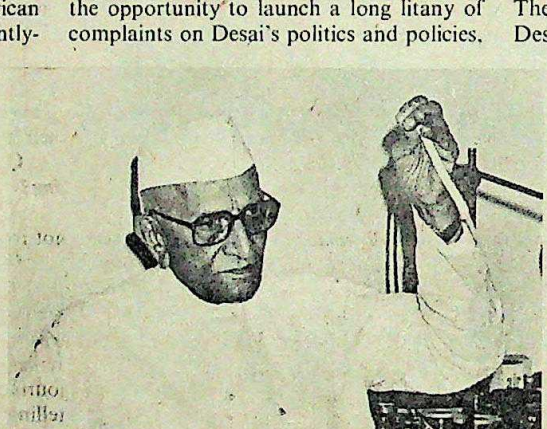
Had the allegation been levelled against any other politician in the country, it might have carried some weight. But to claim that Desai was a CIA mole is akin to accusing the Pope of having a mistress. No other personality since Mahatma Gandhi has set, and maintained, such lofty moral standards in his public and private life. True, Desai was an unabashed anti-communist and pro-West in his leanings, but even his severest critics would dismiss as absurd any claim that he sold his country for the proverbial 30 pieces of silver.

Reactions—both in the media and from his political colleagues—reflected just that. *The Times of India* perhaps put it best: "As agency messages relating to Mr Seymour Hersh's charge came in, our reaction was one of stunned disbelief. Everything we have known about Mr Desai led to the inescapable conclusion that he could not be guilty of such a heinous crime—his long record of dedicated service to the country... his self-righteousness and pride... his singular inability to engage in secret activity of any kind."

The Indian Express was less charitable to Hersh. "We have no hesitation in describing the allegation as a canard and a plant by someone out to defame not merely Mr Desai but India... Mr Hersh has been taken for a ride."

Even the leftist press, which has given Desai a rough time in the past, came immediately to his defence. *Patriot*, while taking the opportunity to launch a long litany of complaints on Desai's politics and policies, said: "However, these reservations have nothing to do with the estimate of his level of political integrity. It is almost impossible to believe that Mr Desai would agree to sell for monetary gain secret information to any foreign country or agency..." Similar letters of indignation poured into Desai's flat.

Hersh's reference to Morarji Desai in his latest book is low-key, appearing almost nonchalantly on the sixth page of the chapter on the Indo-Pakistan war. It is by no means the focus of the chapter. In the chapter Desai is but one of several key players—an important actor but certainly not the most important. "The chapter is not about Desai but about the misconceptions and false information that led to Nixon's Pakistan tilt," says Hersh. "So I put Desai only where he belonged." Hersh makes the following points about Desai in his book: "In mid-May 1971—two months after West Pakistan invaded East—Kissinger and Nixon began privately saying that "reliable sources within the Indian Government had informed them that Mrs Gandhi was planning a 'lightning Israeli-type attack to take over all of Pakistan'." The White House used this information from the "reliable source" to justify their hard line towards India. They could, they stressed, allow Bangladesh to be annexed, or Pakistan to be "humiliated" by India. The "source", Hersh writes, was Morarji Desai.



Morarji: treating the charge with contempt

Key Allegation: The book goes on to say: "The source was not named in the Kissinger and Nixon memoirs, for an obvious reason: the informant was reporting from India through the CIA. Nixon and Kissinger may have been honourable in protecting the man, but the few in the American Government who knew his identity must also have known that his information was highly biased. The informant was undoubtedly Morarji Desai who was fired from the post of deputy prime minister in 1969. Desai was a paid informer for the CIA and was considered one of the agency's important 'assets'.... For years American officials report that Desai was a star performer who was paid $20,000 a year by the CIA during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration through the 303 Committee, the covert intelligence group that was replaced by the 40 Committee under Nixon and Kissinger."

Hersh Continues: "One official recalls that Desai continued to report after Nixon's election, much of his information having to do with contacts between the Indian Government and the Soviet Union. According to one official, Kissinger was 'very impressed with the asset. He couldn't believe it was really in the bag'. During meetings with Nixon and other officials dealing with international crises, Kissinger would occasionally turn knowingly and say to Richard Helms (CIA director) or one of his deputies: 'Why don't you have a source in the Cabinet?'"

Hersh says in a footnote: "I have been able to establish firmly that Desai was re-

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...ough 1970. After that year the offi... who were willing to discuss Desai's ...sion with me were no longer in a ...n to see his reports, which presumably ...ed to flow to Washington. American ...inadvertently provided another hint ...reports were continuing by stressing ...h position and proven reliability of ...ce they used in late 1971 to try and ...the administration's policy in the

...ates **Confusion:** The credibility of ...explosive allegation has been se... eroded by the obvious gaps in his ...The most blatant is the question of ...Hersh states that the "source was un... ...ly Morarji Desai who was fired from ...t of deputy prime minister by Indira ...in 1969—but stayed on in her Cabi... ...er a bitter political dispute". In the ...e to the page, Hersh writes that ...g was reporting to the CIA "through ...and in another paragraph says that ...Gandhi returned as prime minister in July 1979. He also claimed that Desai was passing on information about the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971.

Hersh has obviously got his dates con-

> ***"If I were in the USA, I would have sued him for a million dollars to teach him a lesson. Can I be bought? Has anyone tried to do so earlier?"***
>
> —Morarji Desai

fused. Morarji was sacked as finance minister in 1969 and handed in his resignation as deputy prime minister, a post he held concurrently. He could hardly have been feeding the CIA top-secret information "through 1970" considering he was not even in the Cabinet and was very much persona non grata with Mrs Gandhi's government. However, Hersh does state that after 1969 the material received by the CIA was sketchy and unreliable. Similarly, Morarji could hardly have been passing on information about the Indo-Pakistan war when he was not privy to the kind of information that the CIA would have been interested in. Finally, Hersh should have known that Mrs Gandhi returned to power in January 1980 and not July 1979.

Though the main focus of the book is Kissinger and not Desai, Hersh's mix-up of the dates is nonetheless a serious flaw. Hersh has glossed over his self-admitted errors regarding Desai but it puts a large question mark over the veracity of his charge. In fact, the dates are the most crucial element. Hersh

...ORARJI DESAI

...t is a slur on ...he country"

...MORARJI Desai, the 87-year-old ...rmer prime minister of India, looks much ...nger than his years, with his glowing ...n, upright carriage, and the occasional ...kle in his eye. He continues to be very ...are of current events. As he puts it: "I ...e out of office but not out of politics."

He follows a disciplined daily routine. ...e is up at 4 a.m. and retires at 8 p.m. after ...ich the household has orders not to ...turb him except in an emergency. His ...ing habits are equally rigid: he is at the ...le exactly at 9.45 a.m. and 6.45 p.m. ...e meal is always the same: fruits, ...getables and milk.

Morarji seldom leaves his bedroom ...cept for his daily exercise which consists ...walking up and down for 45 minutes in ...e passage of his fifth floor flat in the ...ana building of Marine Drive where ...e lives with his son Kanti and daughter-in-... Padmabehn. An hour's spinning on the ...rkha is also a must.

The rest of the day is spent reading ...spapers for around 45 minutes, answe...g all his mail personally—he has no ...retary—and this includes responding to ...e numerous queries he receives on medi... and personal problems.

Morarji was reluctant to talk about ...e CIA controversy and, in fact agreed to ...et INDIA TODAY Principal Correspondent COOMI KAPOOR *on the explicit understanding that the* CIA *charge was not to be brought up. But, inevitably, the issue kept cropping up. Excerpts:*

Q. ***I do apologise for bringing up the subject again, but it is such a shocking allegation that Hersh has made.***

A. It is for you to deny, not me.

Q. ***But you must be very angry for this terrible slur on your character?***

A. Why should I be angry. And it is a slur not just on me but on the country.

Q. ***Why has the Government chosen to make no comment?***

A. If I had been in the Government I would not have remained silent. Indira (Gandhi) knows me very well. It is for the Government to have denied the story. It is mischievous to remain silent.

Q. ***Do you feel the press has behaved responsibly in the way it handled the news? While some have featured your denial as a headline, others have merely put a question mark to the allegation.***

A. Where was the need to carry the story on the front page? It was for the press to deny it. *The Indian Express* has carried an editorial denying it.

Q. ***Once the story appeared on the agency ticker, newspapers had to carry it. The* Indian Express *editorial came first because it had the news one day in advance.***

A. The press everywhere is sensational. It should have exercised its responsibility in the way it handled the news by denying it outright. All the same, I am not for curbs on the freedom of the press. It is for you to realise for yourself. Pressmen all over the world are the same. They have their own bias.

Q. ***That must have been very irritating?***

A. Why should I be irritated? I am not irritated.

Q. ***How did you first get the news?***

A. The *Indian Express* man came to see me. I asked him to leave. Later there was a phone call from someone in New Jersey. It was a woman not a man. Lots of journalists have come to see me. I keep telling them I have nothing new to say.

Q. ***Is the American Government hostile to you?***

A. No. It is the Soviets who were opposed to me.

Q. ***But the Americans also know that you always took a firm line where national interests were involved.***

A. That is so.

Q. ***During your time as prime minister did you find a great deal of CIA and KGB infiltration in New Delhi?***

A. Yes. But it is difficult to prove these things. I did not allow them to remain in the embassy if they were caught, but new ones would come. Even our RAW used to work abroad. But it only collected information. It did not infiltrate.

Q. ***Is it a deliberate attempt at disinformation?***

A. That is for you people to investigate.

Q. ***Will you sue Hersh?***

A. I would sue (him) if it was in India. But I don't exactly know what the law is. I can't go to the United States and waste my time and money.

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claims that Desai was reporting to the CIA during the Johnson administration which was from 1964 to 1968. Significantly, Desai was a casualty of the Kamaraj Plan in 1963 and quit the Government. Further, between 1966 and 1967 he was chairman of the Administrative Reforms Committee, hardly a position that would have given him access to top secret intelligence material. He only returned to the Government in 1967 as finance minister. Thus, for three of the four years of the Johnson administration, he was in political limbo, a fact that makes a mockery of much of Hersh's accusation. If Desai was the mole as Hersh alleges, the only period in which he had access to advance information was between 1967 and 1969 and even then it is highly unlikely that he could have provided information on the India-Pakistan war of 1971.

What is even more difficult to believe is the yearly payment of $20,000 that claims the CIA made to Desai. It is unlikely that a cabinet minister could be bought for such a comparatively paltry Hersh claims that he put the $20,000 only for 'credibility' while it has only ded in having the opposite effect.

THE FACT that Hersh's account ained certain factual inaccu gave the editorial writers addi ammunition to counter the charges. himself, characteristically, was terse low-key in his reaction (*see interview*) going as far as to dismiss the allegation "sheer madness". Ultimately, the Hersh gations, however impressive his journ

> ***"I make a living writing stories that most people find unbelievable."***
>
> —Seymour Hersh

SEYMOUR HERSH

"It's just one of those truths"

IN A lengthy interview with Washington Correspondent INDERJIT BADHWAR *in his small and sparse document-strewn office on the 11th floor of the National Press building in Washington, Seymour Hersh elaborated on his allegations against Desai. Excerpts:*

Q. *You are in error when you state that Desai was a Cabinet member during the Bangladesh crisis.*

A. Yes, that's a mistake I should have and will correct. He was a member of Parliament and still had sources in the Government. But previously he was a Cabinet member while he was reporting to the CIA.

Q. *But Kissinger is attacking you. Desai is attacking you. They're calling you a liar.*

A. I've been called that before. Just because some high official denies a story does it mean it is not true? Look, I make a living writing stories that most people find unbelievable. I know there's not an editor in India who believes me on Desai.

Q. *But why should they believe you?*

A. Look, you know my background and you know also that I don't take something like this lightly. And you know that in other pages of the book I didn't identify CIA people. I'm going to show you something that will help you determine whether I have access. I have access you would not believe. (At this point he pulls out highly sensitive intelligence files and codes from an adjacent drawer.) See this stuff. You've never seen this stuff in your life and you never will again.

Q. *So what you're saying is that what you heard about Desai was just not hearsay.*

A. What I am saying is, I have tremendous inside contacts, people who've told me stuff over the years who have been very reliable.... also know that the relationship (between Desai and the CIA) went back a long way. It just did not start in the Johnson administration like the papers have said. It went back a long way. I don't think it's inconsistent with his own integrity.

Q. *Why?*

A. Because he believed that the bad guys were the Russians and the good guys were the Americans. The relationship started out a long time ago. I know other facts about him. I know about other operations that he did.

Q. *How did you react to Desai's name when you first heard about it?*

A. I was amazed. You know, I was impressed. Like I think Kissinger was, and so I wrote that Kissinger himself regarded a man of this sort as an "asset". Because I didn't really believe that the CIA could do as well.

Q. *Why did you include the $20,000 payment figure?*

A. Only for credibility.

Q. *Did his son Kanti Desai's name ever crop up?*

A. No, never. It was the old man

Q. *Did this information just drop in your lap or was it the result of very hard digging?*

A. I was doing an interview on my book with a senior man in the Government and we were getting into the whole area. And about on the third day of conversations he mentioned this (Desai) to Once I had the information I went to a senior man in the intelligence business He confirmed it.

Q. *What was his reaction?*

A. Well, most people felt I shouldn't write it. We went through a lot of deliberations. We hired a separate lawyer to look at this problem. The publisher hired him. The outside counsel studied the whole Desai thing. We could easily have not mentioned Desai's name. It would not have hurt the book. The book's just as good. We mentioned it because it's important for the people to know the kind of people (Nixon and Kissinger) were relying on.

Q. *How long have you had Desai's name?*

A. Let me look. (He pulls a thick file stuffed with notes and documents.) Well, here it is ... it's a long series of interviews ...February, 1980. He always appeared in the CIA reports as "a high level source prominently placed in the Indian Cabinet". That's how he was described. know from people I've talked to who had access to code words and names. I also had access to very senior White House people who told me this. Here's more than one source and I'm sorry, it's just one of those truths. I don't know how he's going to handle it.

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...ds, rest—and fall—with his sources ...ear credibility. Though Hersh claims ...had access to White House officials ...confirmed his charge, his key sour... ...rain from the CIA who, as the past has ...revealed, hold no monopoly on the ...ead have been known to tailor their ...suit their convenience. Two men who ...closely with Desai during the period ...rsh alleges he passed on information ...CIA—Gulzarilal Nanda, then home ...r. and Charan Singh, home minister ...i's Cabinet, had no hesitation in dis... ...the allegations. Nanda termed the ..."ridiculous" while Charan Singh, a ...olitical adversary of Desai's, stated ...ough he had many differences with ...e could not believe that Desai would ...s an agent of a foreign country. ...ily, Jagjivan Ram, of the same politi... ...age as Desai, declined to comment.

...ually surprising was the fact ...e Indian Government has so far ...ed unnaturally silent on the ...s despite Mrs Gandhi's ...t harping on CIA activities in ...nd disinformation spread by ...ency. One reason, of course, ...e that Mrs Gandhi and Desai ...t exactly the best of friends. ...rom being bitter political op... ...x. Desai has made no bones ...his intense distrust and dislike ...r. But the Hersh allegation was ...ous a charge for personal dissi... ...come in the way of an official ...ent.

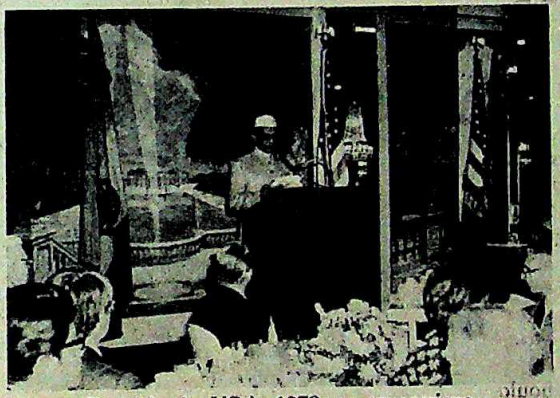
...hat is even more surprising is ...t that Hersh had submitted his ...t on India to the Indian Embassy in ...gton one year ago. According to an ...y source in Washington, the embassy ...own of the charge against Desai a year ...t merely returned the manuscript to ... without making any comments. ...n Ministry sources in New Delhi ...that they knew Hersh's book contai... ...chapter on India but had been infor... ...t it was nothing serious or damaging.

...ysterious Source: This is not the first ...t reports about a cabinet minister on ...payroll have been aired. At least three ...ely published books, including Ni... ...and Kissinger's biographies, refer to a ...placed CIA source in India while ...es Powers's book on former CIA chief ...d Helms also referred to a CIA source ...as a cabinet minister during the Ban... ...crisis. But that the source was ...almost impossible to believe.

...Hersh insists that he knows the entire ...of how the CIA "turned" Desai and how ...projects he was involved in. He also ...t he will provide additional details if ...ged. But the facts speak otherwise.

Apart from Hersh's gaffe about Desai being in the Cabinet during the 1971 war with Pakistan, there are other aspects to the story which certainly do not synchronise with the allegations against Desai.

Hersh claims in his interview with INDIA TODAY (*see box*) that "arch-reactionary" Desai acted the way he did because he genuinely believed the Soviets were the bad guys and the Americans good guys. But Desai's record in office shows that he often took a very firm line with the US when he believed that the country's self-interest was involved. One such instance was in 1968 when Mrs Gandhi was seriously considering signing the American non-proliferation treaty. However, cabinet papers clearly record that Desai, who was finance minister, firmly objected to the proposal. It is also significant that Desai may have been anti-communist but has never been anti-Soviet. He is an ardent



Desai in the US in 1978: no concessions

believer in non-alignment and during his prime ministership undertook a successful visit to Moscow and India's relations with the Soviets remained largely untarnished.

Discrepancies: Similarly, according to Janata Party MP Subramaniam Swamy, it was again Desai who, in 1968, protested against the CIA-sponsored joint project to place a fresh nuclear test monitoring device on Nanda Devi after the original was buried by a snow-storm. Similarly, the agreement with the CIA in 1959 for training of Khampa rebels to ambush Chinese convoys was terminated at Desai's insistence 10 years later.

Hersh has also made the allegation to INDIA TODAY that even though Desai was not in the Indian Cabinet during the Indo-Pakistan conflict, he had good sources in the Cabinet to keep him informed. It is more or less common knowledge that at that particular time, Mrs Gandhi was not taking the Cabinet into confidence and only a few close advisers like D.P. Dhar knew what was happening and all of them were both politically and temperamentally opposed to Desai.

In January 1978 when Carter visited India, he was inadvertently caught whispering to an aide that he would write "a cold, blunt letter to the old man" because he was visibly annoyed at Desai's adamant stand. Further, Desai refused to sign the full scope nuclear safeguards treaty when prime minister which is even more restrictive than the non-proliferation treaty.

Even top US officials serving in India at the time have pooh-poohed the possibility of Desai being involved. In separate interviews to *Mid-Day*, the Bombay daily, John Kenneth Galbraith and Robert Goheen, former US envoys in India who have known Desai intimately, dismissed Hersh's allegations as unbelievable, while Dr Russel Jack Smith, CIA station chief in New Delhi between 1971 and 1974, also denied knowledge of any cabinet minister being involved in passing information to the CIA.

Alternative Suggestion: M.V. Kamath, former editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India* who was posted in Washington as *The Times of India* correspondent between 1969 and 1978, feels that the story could be a plant or a mix-up in that Hersh's CIA source could have confused Morarji Desai with some other Desai, a premise that has widely gained credence in India in the wake of Hersh's revelations. Swamy's theory is that the Desai Hersh mentions is possibly M.J. Desai who was India's foreign secretary from 1959 to 1963.

However, the M.J. Desai theory has not been taken seriously. Hersh himself when asked by INDIA TODAY insisted that it was not M.J. Desai but Morarji. Hersh also said that if challenged, he could produce documented evidence to prove it was Morarji and also pin-point the projects he was involved in as a CIA agent.

In the final analysis, it essentially boils down to a clash of reputations between a veteran journalist with a creditable track record and a politician with a formidable moral reputation and an unimpeachable record of 53 years of public life, which make the charges against Desai seem ridiculous. But there is also little doubt that the allegations are not only a slur on Desai but also on the country that its former prime minister should be accused of treason. The Government, of course, is not obliged to answer every charge made in the press. But the publicity the Hersh charge has received and the certainty that if Parliament were in session, the Government would have been forced to respond, makes it imperative for the Government to break its pregnant silence and clear the murky area between fact and fiction where the sordid affair is now suspended.

—DILIP BOBB with COOMI KAPOOR in Bombay and INDERJIT BADHWAR in Washington

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THE PRICE OF POWER

In Cold Blood

WHATEVER be Seymour Hersh's motives in naming former prime minister Morarji Desai as a paid CIA *informant, the fact remains that the real focus of his book* The Price of Power *is Henry Kissinger and his transgressions in tandem with Richard Nixon. Washington Correspondent* INDERJIT BADHWAR *profiles the man and his explosive book.*

WHEN investigative reporter Seymour M. Hersh began rummaging in Henry Kissinger's closet four years ago there was little doubt—if any—that the results would be explosive. Even Kissinger—who weathers criticism like a duck's back repels water—awaited the conclusion of Hersh's project with extreme trepidation. Last fortnight Hersh's 666-page book *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*, exploded over the United States like a bomb whose reverberations could be felt in every major world capital.

The book which is expected to climb to number one on the *New York Times* best seller list at record speed, is both a devastating critique and scathing denunciation of the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy era by one of America's most feared investigative reporters. American policy during that fateful time, Hersh relates, was the product of treachery, deceit, lies, personal jealousies, and endless calumny rather than rational behaviour. And Hersh in chapter after chapter systematically demolishes and debunks Nixon's and Kissinger's recently published memoirs of that decade as misleading, self-serving apologies.

Vivid Exposés: Open the book at any page and the exposés—laid out in cold blood and vivid detail—jump out at you: Nixon subordinating the Peking summit to his desires for maximum television coverage; Kissinger's negotiating blunders which undermined the arms limitation talks with the Soviets; Kissinger deliberately ignoring important signals that may have led to an early Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty; Nixon's deliberate betrayal of Kissinger's Vietnam peace negotiations for his own domestic political ends; the secret bombing of Cambodia in which "Kissinger insisted that missions had to be conducted without the knowledge of the Strategic Air Command's normal command and control system...(and) wanted the Cambodian bombing arranged so that the crew members aboard the B-52s would not know they were bombing Cambodia". (This was accomplished through a series of last minute target changes controlled by radar personnel on the ground.); Kissinger and Nixon deliberately misinforming the American people that the Soviets had tested a MIRV (multiple, independently targeted, re-entry vehicle) in the Pacific in 1969 even when the duo knew fully well that the Soviets had tested a completely different, less ominous weapon.

But Hersh is one of those reporters who cannot be wished away or easily dismissed as inaccurate. His reputation is awesome. It is well-known that Kissinger lives in terror of him. And he is one of a handful of reporters who has been able to weave his way to the truth through the CIA's tangled web of lies and deception. And when he hits the CIA, the usually intrepid establishment at Langley quakes. Hersh is always denounced as a liar but in the end his facts almost always check out. No one believed or would even print Hersh's exposé of the My Lai massacre in Vietnam where an American platoon under Lt Calley mercilessly gunned down innocent women and children. The Pentagon put all its energies to work to cover up the story and discredit Hersh. In the end My Lai was to become one of the biggest stories of the Vietnam war and Hersh won a Pulitzer prize for it.

Nixon: the Peking obsession

Seymour Hersh's explosive and controversial account of the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy offers a richly detailed inside look at the manipulations and machinations that undergirded the Nixon administration's 'tilt' towards Pakistan during the Bangladesh crisis of 1971.

A chapter entitled 'The Indo-Pakistan War', paints Indian leaders and diplomats as statesman-like and rational in their handling of the crisis while it depicts Nixon and Kissinger as a pair of deceitful punks caught up in their own illusions and prejudices as they attempt to create phantasmagorical scenarios to justify why they looked the other way when Pakistani dictator Yahya Khan was committing genocide in East Pakistan.

Hersh leads his readers through the litany of rationalisations that have been used by Nixon and Kissinger in their memoirs to justify the tilt to Pakistan even at the cost of a third world war. Then, step by step, he demolishes their arguments. For many in the State Department, Hersh writes, the Bangladesh tragedy was compounded by what seemed to be an appalling ignorance in the White House of the realities of South

Indo-Soviet Axis: The Nixon administration's policies emanated ultimately from Kissinger's desire to reward Yahya Khan and Agha Hillaly for their role in bringing America's opening to China, from Kissinger's desire to prove to China that America could play the tough-guy against the Soviets portrayed to be an Indo-Soviet axis, from Nixon's personal dislike for Mrs Gandhi and ascetic Indians; and from the White House addiction to misinformation.

This is a far cry from the public accounts of that period that have been provided by the Nixon and Kissinger memoirs. The duo have maintained that their Pakistan tilt was justified because they had information from a reliable source in India that Mrs Gandhi would use the crisis to dismember Pakistan and annex East Pakistan. The Soviets were secretly encouraging India to militarily demiliate Pakistan, an American ally; the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty was further proof of a planned Indo-Soviet gang-bang on Pakistan; India's military planning was making an American-inspired political solution impossible; and information from 'reliable sources' that India would launch a massive attack in the West and annex all of Kashmir justified the continuing of the tilt.

These were the grand delusions on the basis of which Nixon and Kissinger were ready to risk even nuclear war with the Soviets, Hersh reports. He reveals that Yahya's adventurism, starting with his attack on Pakistan and ending in his ignominious defeat after one invasion of India in the West, was inspired in part by American assurances after Kissinger's return from his secret China visit that China would come to Pakistan's aid and that, should the Soviets interfere, America would risk a direct showdown with them.

But, as Hersh points out, Bangladesh was neither annexed nor occupied by the Indians, India never waged a massive invasion on Pakistan, the Soviets constantly urged restraint on India and even advised Mrs Gandhi to delay recognition of Bangladesh in the hope that a political solution could be worked out. Kissinger was well aware that Yahya was not interested in a political solution and the Indians, who were

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...nt to sign the Indo-Soviet friendship ...that had been under negotiation for ...l years, did so only after Mrs Gandhi ...formed of a threat made by Kissinger: ...ger told ambassador L.K. Jha that if ...entered an Indo-Pakistan war on ...n's side, the United States would do ...g about it.

...dian Tilt: Here are additional details ...Hersh's account: "When the slaughter ...gladesh began in March 1971, the ...an ambassador to New Delhi, Ken... Keating in a dramatic cable to ...ington asked Nixon to avoid 'associa... ...th reign of military terror... this is a ...hen principles make best policies...', ...commended that Nixon promptly, ...y and prominently deplore this bruta... ...t is most important ...actions be taken now, ...inevitable and immi... ...emergence of horrible ..." In his memoirs ...ger ridiculed Keating ...ving been "taken over ...Indians".

...t if anybody had ...taken over, it was ...Farland, the Ameri... ...bassador to Pakistan. ...al Security Council ...ls who had wanted ...ge Yahya to show re... ...in East Pakistan ...not count on Farland ...deliver such a messa... ...Yahya. Farland was re... ...to spend hours ...ng with Yahya Khan whose alcoholic ...ual excesses were well-known to the ...Department.... one national security ...cil aide, who saw much of the daily ...traffic from Farland to the State De... ...ent, described the American ambassa... ...is having "grovelled before the guy ...ya Khan)".

...by mid-April, the State Department ...openly to dissent from the Ni... Kissinger policies. A high-level policy ...met at the State Department and stres... ...the importance of good relations with ...because the group concluded: "India ...ed to be moving into a period of new po... ...stability and was demonstrating a re... ...willingness to develop a cooperative ...onship with the United States." Hersh ...ents: "The men in the bureaucracy did ...perceive the extent to which they were ...ming upstream against a White House ...verge of a breakthrough with China." ...Several weeks later Nixon appeared to ...the dissident bureaucrats in the State ...rtment a bone by ordering the cessation ...me military aid to Pakistan. But on that ...order he added a hand-written instruction: "To all hands. Don't squeeze Yahya at this time." By early July America's officially stated policy was one of urging Yahya to re-establish civilian rule in East Pakistan so that the 10 million refugees who had taken shelter in India could return home. "It was a policy that had no chance of resolving the basic issues. For the demand of the Awami League included the immediate release of its jailed leader, Mujibur Rehman, and an autonomous East Pakistan.... Yahya Khan, as Kissinger knew, had no intention of meeting such demands... ".

Influencing Decisions: On July 17, Kissinger summoned ambassador Jha to a private meeting and delivered a direct warning which Jha reported in an urgent cable to New Delhi: "If China became involved on Pakistan's side during an Indo-Pakistan war, we would be unable to help you against China." Hersh adds: "Jha's cabled warning of the new power alignment in South Asia led to a revaluation at top levels of the Indian Government and played a major—if secret—role in India's decision to sign a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union."

Kissinger: main target

State Department bureaucrats took the treaty "in stride". They did not consider it to signal "unequivocal Soviet support for India or a cessation of Moscow's effort to encourage a political settlement (of the Bangladesh crisis). The Soviet Union continued to pressure India not to recognise an independent Bangladesh, and it continued to urge restraint, both in published commentaries and in private communications to New Delhi".

But these complexities were lost on the White House. "Kissinger simply chose to ignore the effect of his July 17 warning to Jha.... The warning and its immense impact on Indo-American relations was also omitted from his memoirs". Instead Kissinger and Nixon chose to interpret the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty as an attempt by the two countries to humiliate Pakistan—a friend of both China and the United States. And Kissinger used the treaty to justify an even harder American line against India.

After Kissinger's China visit, State Department officials hoped that Nixon would urge Yahya Khan to make some political concessions towards the Awami League. When they urged Kissinger to take such steps at a private meeting, Kissinger responded: "Why is it our business how they govern themselves? The president always says it is a tilt towards Pakistan. But every proposal I get from the bureaucracy is in the opposite direction. Sometimes I think I am in a nut-house."

Insulting Wait: When Mrs Gandhi visited Washington in November, Nixon deliberately insulted her because she had been outspoken with him on the subject of Bangladesh. On the second day of her visit Nixon kept her waiting for 45 minutes before their meeting. One of Kissinger's aides "realised something was up". Writes Hersh: "When Kissinger didn't make his usual appearance before the appointment hour...no apology was given."

Even though Nixon's memoirs never mentioned the possibility of a nuclear war in the event of an extended conflict in the subcontinent, he mentioned that dire possibility during testimony in 1975. "During his secret grand jury testimony to the Watergate special prosecution, he shocked the lawyers by insisting that the United States 'had come close to nuclear war' during the Indo-Pakistan dispute."

Distressing Invasion: Chinese talk about helping Pakistan was more rhetoric than reality. The country was still in the midst of its cultural revolution upheavals. And Hersh points to evidence that Peking was distressed with Yahya's invasion of East Pakistan. When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto visited Beijing just before the war with India, Hersh quotes a former Yahya aide as saying: "The Chinese left him with no doubt about their disapproval of the policy repression in Bangladesh... Bhutto was handed a list of 60 prominent pro-Peking Bengali leaders who had been slaughtered by Yahya's troops."

At the end of the war, Mrs Gandhi wrote a letter to Nixon citing the American declaration of independence with its call for the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as a "great moment" of history "which has inspired millions of people to die for liberty....The fact of the matter is," she continued, "the rulers of West Pakistan got away with the impression that they could do what they liked because no one, not even the United States, would choose to take a public position that while Pakistan's integrity as certainly sacrosanct, human rights, liberty, were no less so. Lip service was paid to the need for a political solution. But not a single worthwhile step was taken to bring it about...."

"For Nixon and Kissinger," writes Hersh, "there was no issue. Yahya Khan held the key to Nixon's re-election—their conduit to the Chinese would not be challenged. The policy was easy to rationalise: those who were against Yahya Khan were pro-Indian and pro-Soviet. India, under Prime Minister Gandhi was drawn into tragedy as millions of refugees poured across the Indian border to sanctuary."

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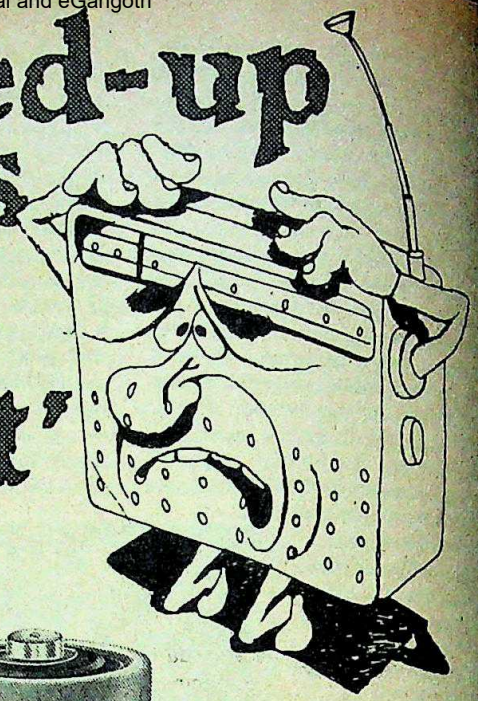

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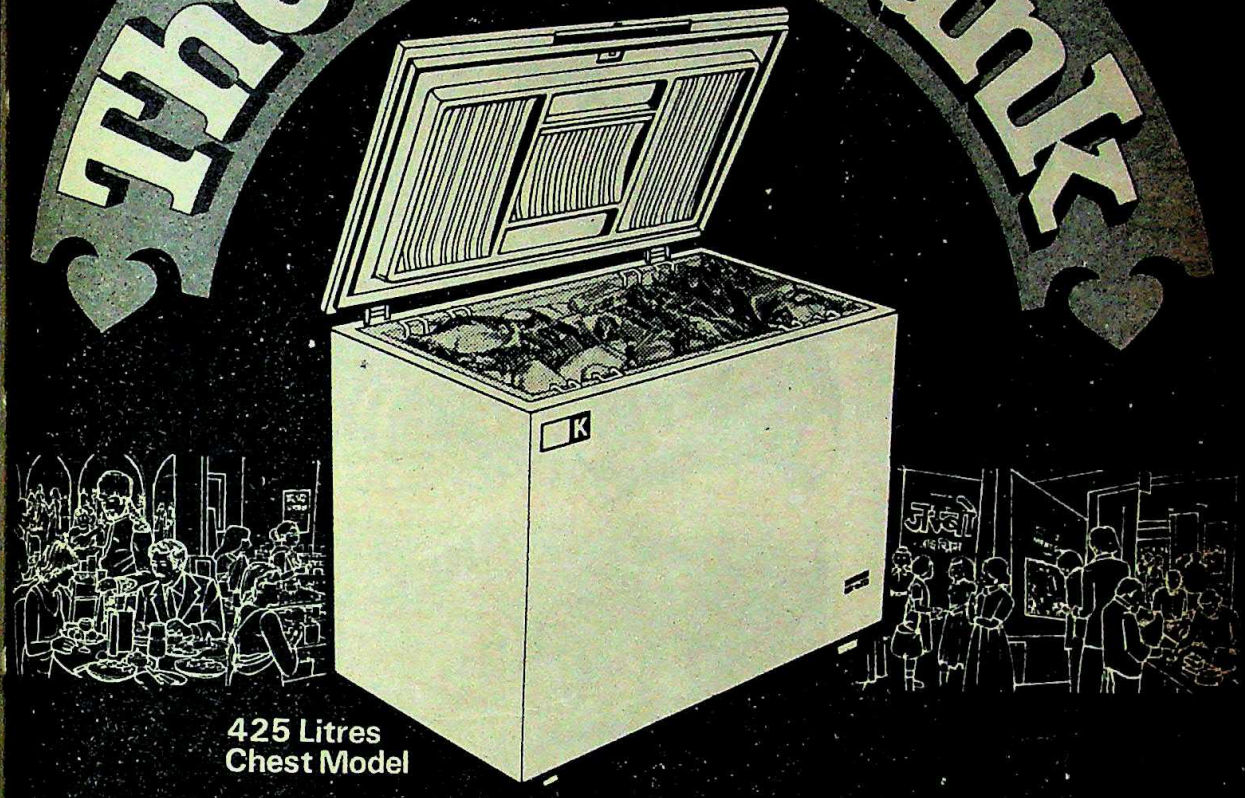

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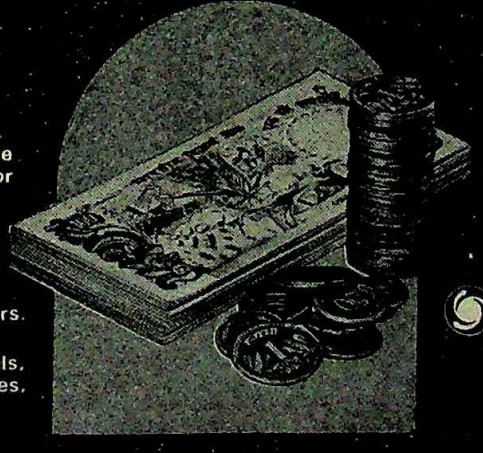

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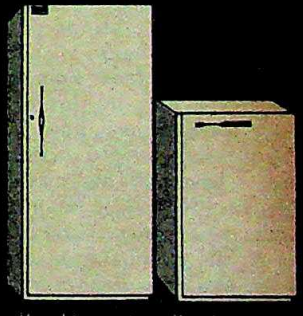

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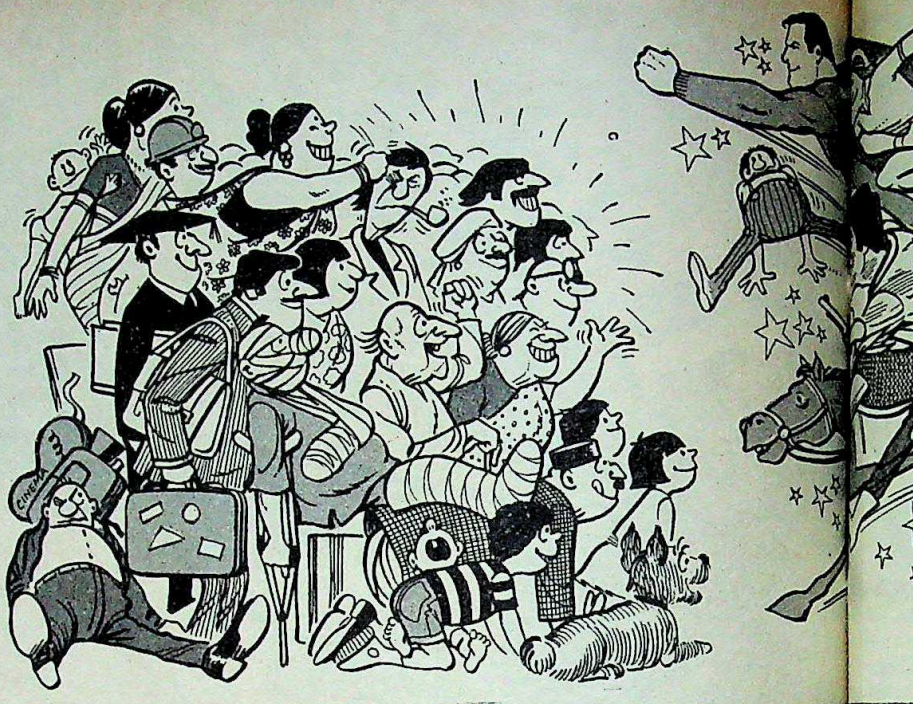
The Video Boom



THERE is little reason why a video revolution should sweep through India. Few video cassette recorders (VCR's) are manufactured in the country, imports are restricted, and in any case the prices are high—a VCR and colour television set together cost as much as a year's salary for the middle class Indian. Logically, videos should be little more than a plaything for the rich.

That's the theory. The reality is quite different. A video revolution has already taken the country by storm, caught the popular imagination with a speed that outshines every other popular medium before it, and set itself up as the mass entertainer of the future. It's not just the rich, and it's not just the metropolises; if anything, this latest consumer by-product of the world-wide electronics revolution has conquered small towns and semi-urban areas even more easily.

The well-to-do have private sets for home viewing. And hundreds of video libraries, hiring out pre-recorded film cassettes for as little as Rs 10 a day, cater to this rapidly growing clientèle. For the others, video has an answer too. Across the country, mini video-theatres and video-cafes have mushroomed overnight, making this new medium available to all comers. For every cinema theatre in the country, there are already two video theatres/cafés/buses—and that's the estimate of the All India Film Producers Council. Worse, their number is growing. Most long distance buses now offer video shows. Hotels have jumped on the bandwagon, and so have clubs and even hospitals —the Nanavati Hospital in Bombay puts on a video film for its patients every evening. So does the Apollo Hospital in Madras.

Spreading Craze: Figures in this business are notoriously unreliable. But informed guesses put the total number of video sets in the country at close to three lakh—and that number is growing by 20,000 every month. Neither television in the late '60s and early '70s, nor the transistor revolution

The video explosion symbolised by crowds at a video cassette parlour in New Delhi

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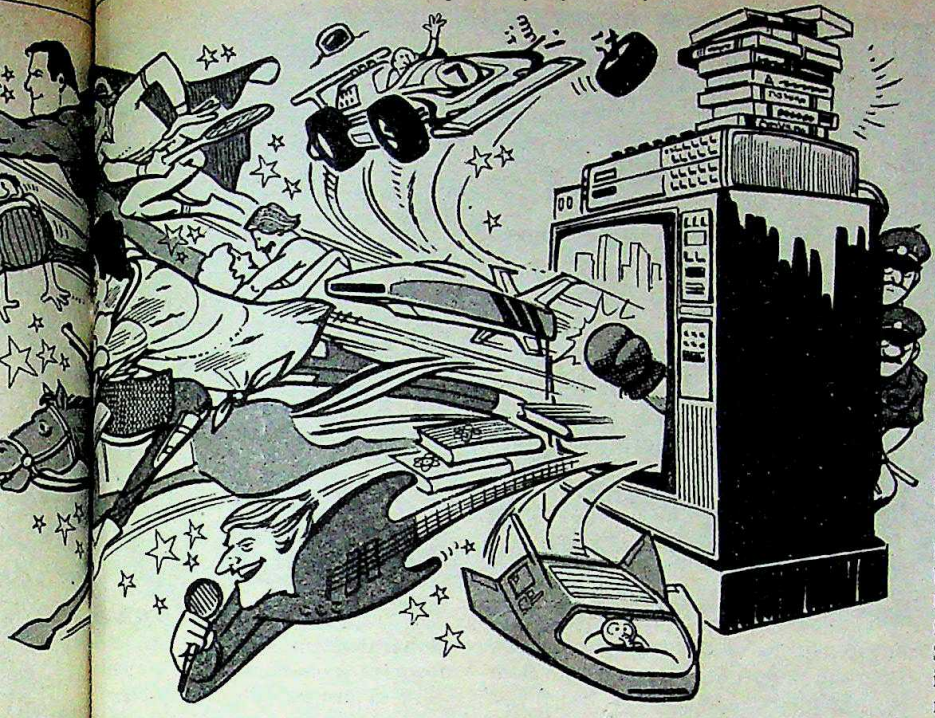

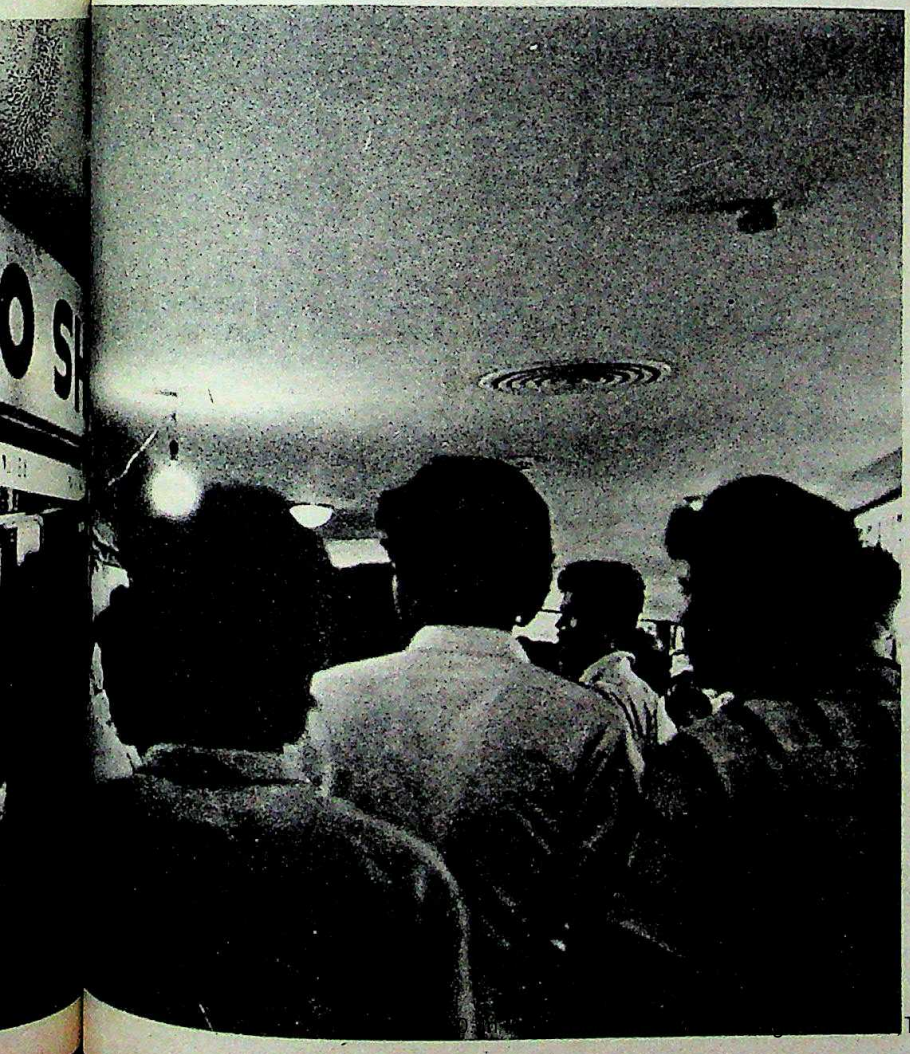

before that, was quite so sudden in its onslaught. Indeed, few outside those immediately concerned realise the magnitude of what is happening. But the facts speak for themselves. India has one car or telephone for every 100 in the US, and one radio for every 20. But in VCR's, India has one for every 15 in America—which has five million. Already, the cash investment in VCR's and the colour TV sets that go with them must total over Rs 700 crore—enough to set up the equivalent of three Maruti car plants.

Delhi's crowded underground Palika Bazar has no fewer than 30 video cassette libraries; on average, each of them has at least 100 clients, while some have over 500. Bombay has over 350 libraries: at the inaugural meeting of the Video Club Association, Bombay last fortnight, no fewer than 150 library-owners attended. Smaller towns like Amritsar have 10 or 20, but their numbers are growing rapidly. And in Madhya Pradesh, there are enough library-owners to form a Madhya Pradesh Video Vyawsai Sangh. The Film Federation of India, which is the film industry's apex body, found after a recent survey that the "video menace" had spread to 400 towns in the country, ranging from small urban clusters in the Jharia coal belt to Bhusawal in Maharashtra, Churu in Rajasthan, Deogarh in Bihar, and tiny coastal settlements in Kerala and Karnataka.

In the little-known Maharashtra town of Amravati recently, the range of films being shown in mini video-theatres would put any metropolis in the shade. As Dennis Pereira, representative in India of the Motion Picture Export Association of America discovered to his immense surprise, the choice of films included *Tarzan the Apeman, Soldier Blue, The Towering Inferno, Bulldozer, Game of Death, The Enforcer, Man with the Golden Gun,* and *Visiting Hours* (a Hollywood film yet to be released in India).

In the desert town of Jodhpur in western Rajasthan, eight mini video-theatres were simultaneously showing *Jaani Dost* barely a week after the film's all-India release. Esquire Video, an export outfit seeking to establish a national chain of 500 video libraries, found strong demand from such far-flung corners as Nagaland. And in Orissa, the Rourkela steel plant authorities have wired the steel township with community video, setting up TV sets in public places for showing films on safety and punctuality, apart from Hindi films and—during the Asian Games last November—daily reviews of the previous day's highlights in distant Delhi.

Central Transmission: In the high-rise jungle that is Bombay's Cuffe Parade, 40 skyscrapers have been similarly wired, so that a master VCR beams films into every apartment. When some residents in Sangam Apartments, off Calcutta's Park Street, pro-

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Customers queueing up for cassettes at a popular video parlour: varied clientèle

posed a similar arrangement, the suggestion was turned down by the majority—most of them already had their own VCR's and were not interested in the local equivalent of "pay TV".

Remote hinterland areas have caught the fever too. Electronics Secretary P.P. Gupta, on a brief holiday in the tourist watering-hole of Manali, saw a video theatre making what to him was an incredible announcement: "3.30 *Gandhi*; 6.30 *ET-The Extra Terrestrial*; 9.30 *Andhaa Kaanoon*" Gupta later counted 20 video-cafes on the 45 km stretch between Manali and Kulu. Other tourist spots in Himachal Pradesh have been similarly invaded. In Kangra, Dharamsala and Solan, Amitabh Bachchan and the mountain air seem an irresistible combination.

At every point of enquiry, the enormity of the video invasion slams home with the force of unexpected discovery. Music Nest, a video library in a south Delhi residential area, gives every impression of catering to the local residents. In reality, as proprietor Vinod Chandra Rawat points out, 80 of his 400 regular customers come in from out of town, some of them making the weekly trip from as far afield as Allahabad to take back a clutch of video cassettes. Others come with the same weekly regularity from Agra, Bareilly, Saharanpur and Meerut. In Calcutta, the city's biggest electronics store, Capital Electronics, has a second surprise. Proprietor Anand Agarwal says the hottest selling item on his shelves is not the transistor or the stereo music system but the VCR: 50 every month.

Travellers' Tales: Jo McGowan, an American married to an Indian, serves up a third surprise. She couldn't find a non-video bus to take her on the overnight run from Dharwar, in northern Karnataka, to Bombay. Reluctantly, she took a "video-bus" and sat through the songs and fights of two consecutive Bachchan films, the second finally ending at two in the morning. "Everyone was simply glued to the action," McGowan says. "Even when the bus stopped at an intermediate bus station, no one would make a move unless the film was switched off. Then they would all rush out because the bus was almost due to start moving. And when they got back in, the film was on again."

Pereira: worried and angry

Those outside the bus were as keen to get a piece of the action. At the bus station, reports McGowan, eager faces would peer in through the bus windows to catch glimpses of the film. And when the bus started moving, they would run alongside, catching the last few frames of the action before the bus sped away.

Other travellers' tales now include the story of a bus journey from Bombay to Mahabaleshwar. En route, the bus broke down for seven hours. But there was nary a word of protest from the passengers: the conductor merely ran *Shakti*—twice over.

Across the country, the cathode ray tube is proving a powerful mental magnet. When Usha Narain, who runs an export concern in Delhi, bought a VCR two months ago, she told her daughters the set was to be used only on week-ends. But the good resolution quickly went out of the window. Teen-aged daughter Urvashi watched *Man with the Golden Gun* twice in a row one evening, and switched it back on the first thing next morning. "There was no other film in the house. When Mrs Narain's sister came visiting from Pune, there were four films screened in a day.

In the Sehgal household in New Delhi's residential area of South Extension, five-year-old Sanjay has seen *Kaalia* over a dozen times, and claims the proud achievement of knowing the film's entire dialogue by heart. Younger brother Suresh, barely two years old, can repeat Bachchan's catchier lines in the film. Such cinematic indulgence, unthe dreamt of in the past, stretches to the geriatric end of the age spectrum as well. In Bombay, for example, one group of elderly Parsi ladies meets twice a week at a friend's place to watch the latest video thriller.

Inevitably, social habits are changing. Video parties are increasingly common, the evening's film usurping all conversation. Food is handed out in the darkened room. In Bangalore, video buff Rajesh Kapoor (who runs an industrial unit) now spends weekends with his 18-member joint family watching video films.

How and why did such an unlikely phenomenon sweep the country in this fashion? The short answer is governme

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Passengers while away the hours watching Bachchan on a state transport luxury video bus: "glued to the action"

ky. Two years ago, when videos re still an exotic commodity more ed about than seen, a set cost over Rs 00. Sunil Bhu, who now runs a video- in south Delhi, paid a little more than for his VCR. But by 1982 the price had pped to Rs 30,000—partly because a few estic companies had started putting ther small numbers of sets from impor- sub-assemblies, and partly because ggers had begun to feed demand more ively.

The watershed, however, was the Asian es last November-December. For one , the Government decided to allow the ort of 90,000 colour TV kits that would sembled and sold in India by domestic companies. For another, it went ahead announced that relatives and friends ad could gift TV sets at lower rates of ort duty to folks back home in time for Asiad. For the 1.5 lakh people who thus ired colour TV sets in little more than months, and paid Rs 8,000 and more for pleasure, Doordarshan's fare now ed poor meat. The chemistry of enter- ment aspirations had changed.

Dropping Prices: But even more signi- nt was the Government's decision, early year, to allow video recorders to be ght in as travellers' personal baggage, to ltaneously increase the duty-free ance and finally to slash the duty on ss value baggage. Overnight, the cost of ging in a VCR tumbled from around Rs 00 to Rs 9,000. Prices in the open market ched in helpless sympathy: Weston troniks, which used to sell the VCR's it mbled for Rs 24,000 was forced to slash price to Rs 21,000—but sales have never- ess dropped from 250 a month to barely a dozen. The open market price for an imported video recorder is no more than Rs 14,000.

Simultaneously, over the last couple of years, the prices of blank video cassettes crashed from Rs 700 or more to Rs 250; video libraries, facing increasing competition, reduced their hire charges for pre-recorded cassettes from Rs 50 to Rs 10 and even Rs 5 per day; video filming outfits slashed their rates for filming weddings from Rs 5,000 to Rs 500.

With each drop in prices, videos reached out from the drawing-rooms of ex-

BHAWAN SINGH

Bhojwani: "crack, bang and whoosh"

clusive homes to the upper middle class, then petty businessmen, and finally into even more broad-based social strata. Though this must be an exception, Gurpreet Singh, who runs Gaytime (Delhi's largest video library, in Palika Bazar), says he counts a milkman and a *chaiwallah* among his hundreds of clients. For those who still can't afford private sets at even the current prices—and they are after all the very vast majority—video enterprise has provided the answer through public showings.

Instant Entertainment: A phenomenon of this magnitude must meet a variety of human needs. The seemingly limitless desire to watch Bombay films is explained in part by the general lack of entertainment in most towns and cities. But it also speaks of the absence of genuine hobbies, the failure to cultivate interests outside of work. And the children have no playing fields. Video therefore provides the instant answer to urban boredom.

Usha Narain has four daughters, her export concern to run, and enjoys a passion for gardening that shows in the truly breathtaking range of exotic plants outside her living room. Video, nevertheless, is an answer to evenings spent alone, now that the children have grown up. And to Shyella Bhojwani, Delhi-based wife of a foreign service officer, the video is switched on when she wants her two-and-a-half-year-old son out of the way. "It's amazing," she says approvingly. "He's picked up a lot of noises like crack, bang and whoosh from these films."

Far removed from this scene, a rising young politician in Patna finds that his video provides him the opportunity to screen pornographic films to win friends and influence people. Reflecting more main-line interests, Bombay restauranteur Sanjiv Chona says: "One of the great thrills of this new medium is the fact that you get to see all those larger-than-life films you read about for years before they can be released in the cinema houses." In contrast, college-going Gouri Kishen says: "I don't like this video business. Too many people are getting hooked on to it. But it helps me see old films like

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Casablanca that I would not otherwise be able to enjoy."

Enterprise: With such breadth and intensity of demand, it is inevitable that enterprise should be spelt VCR. Among the video libraries, Bombay's Shemrao is possibly the best stocked, with a total of 5,000 different titles that, apart from the latest Hindi and English films, include such top-rung serials as *Dallas, Three's Company, Roots, Charlie's Angels, Hart to Hart,* and the latest in international soccer matches, boxing bouts, cricket tests, Bjorn Borg's last ever tennis match. Proprietor B.H. Maru now plans to launch a magazine informing his library members of the latest films available, and the relative merits of the different films and programmes.

The rest of the infrastructure needed to support a phenomenon of this magnitude is also in place. Hundreds of electronics and television shops in every large city now deal as a major line in video equipment, and have trained technicians for their repair and maintenance. In the smaller towns, video operators rent out a VCR and colour TV with a couple of films at rates ranging from Rs 150 to Rs 250 a day to people who want to impress their guests, or screen a film at a family get-together. Video films are now a major distraction at weddings in Calcutta.

Ravinder Paul, who owns Paul Movies in Delhi, is another kind of video entrepreneur, meeting the new and burgeoning demand for video films: at weddings, for advertisers, training programmes, corporate audio-visual shows. The simplicity of video technology, the ease of shooting, the avoidance of repeated "takes" (wasting time and expensive raw film), the absence of processing from negative to positive, easy transportability of the finished product in cassette form—all these have contributed to the beginnings of another kind of video boom.

Paul operates at the upper end of the market, but cheaper competitors are now willing to film weddings for as little as Rs 500. Throw in the cost of the blank cassette, and a wedding is recorded for posterity for well under Rs 1,000: less than an album of colour photographs would cost. Demand, naturally, has exploded. In Punjab, weddings are filmed and copies sent to relatives in Southall. In Hyderabad, bridegrooms working in the Gulf area keep the original videotape of the wedding back home and take copies with them to their work-places for occasional viewing.

Sales Spurt: With private bus operators throwing in video films as an extra attraction to relieve the boredom of long journeys, even public sector bodies like the India Tourism Development Corporation and the Punjab and Haryana state transport corporations now offer video shows in some of their luxury buses. Said Harjit Singh, a driver with one of the buses operated by the Ludhiana-based K.D. Travels: "People ask whether there is a video in the bus, and only then they agree to travel." Paramjit Singh who lives in Canada and was on a visit to Ludhiana, explains why: "It is really relaxing travelling in the bus. The time goes a lot faster and easier."

KRISHAN MURARI KISHEN

The video invasion hits the smaller towns like Patna: demolishing boundaries

Hotels too are discovering the virtues of video. West End Hotel in Bangalore was one of the early ones to offer the new attraction; and Kumar Chandran, assistant general manager, is ecstatic: "Room service sales have just shot up," he says. In Patna, the Maurya-Patna's manager Deepak Lalvani saw the video as a major new attraction in a town that provides little public entertainment, and where the rickshaw is still the common mode of transport. And in Delhi the Taj Palace Hotel has already acquired the latest high quality video equipment—laser video, that offers better reproduction and no cassette wear and tear.

CHANDER UDAY SINGH

Khanna: protection

Hira: organised

Feeding such master-VCR systems is another area of video enterprise. In Delhi's Okhla Industrial Estate, MC Engineering is now manufacturing the master antenna television (MATV) systems and community antenna television (CATV) systems that enable hotels, high-rise buildings and communities like the Rourkela steel township to wire up for video. Says the company's Joint Managing Director O.N. Sharma: "We have already installed our systems in 20 hotels, and demand is booming." Sharma sees future customers among training establishments, airport hotels that could offer the latest flight information on a video TV channel, hospital theatres (on which senior surgeons can keep an eye while working elsewhere), and large commercial establishments which need centralised security systems.

THE ON-RUSHING video wave now threatens to bring down several established social bulwarks. With pornographic films a fact of life on the video circuit, the censorship superstructure threatens to become irrelevant. Similarly, the Government's stoutly defended monopoly of Doordarshan could become increasingly meaningless as alternative programmes become available. Usha Narain says: "I don't even check any more to see what is being offered on Doordarshan." And in Bombay, Ronny Screwwala, director of Nemula (which offers video services to high-rise apartments), says he plans to introduce a series of community programmes in Cuffe Parade: quiz competitions, televised cricket matches and other shows. "Our main thrust is entertainment and we are devising new entertainment formats which will help in greater identifica-

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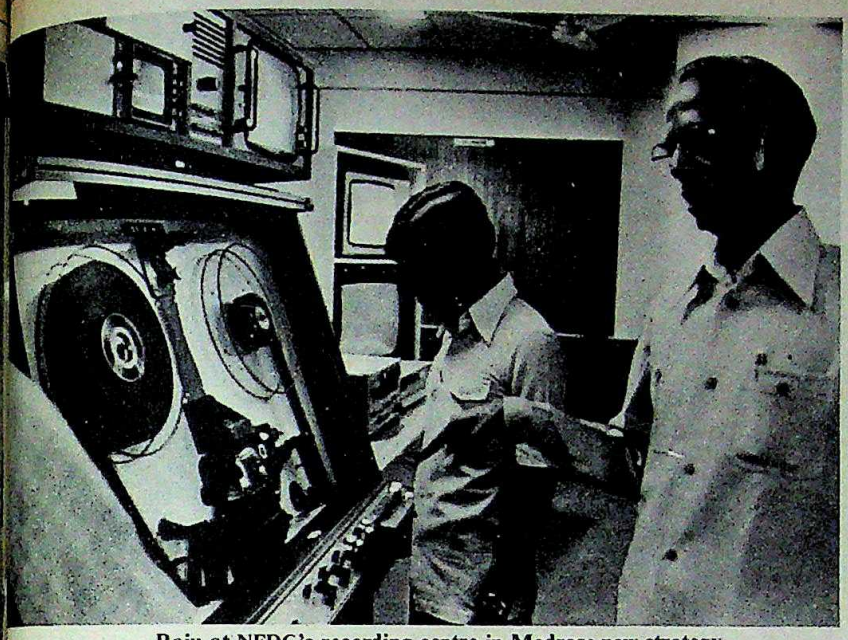

Raju at NFDC's recording centre in Madras: new strategy

...n and community participation. We ex-...t these programmes to get a tremendous ...sponse."

But the biggest bastion to tremble under ...e video onslaught is the Rs 700-crore Hindi ...m industry. Only a year ago the film mog-...ls scoffed at any suggestion that video ...uld ever hurt their markets in India. But ...st fortnight, the industry was running ...ared and demanding a government crack-...wn on the thousands of teashops, cafes, ...ni theatres and library networks that were ...awing at the base of the industry's ...ances.

Illegal Business: For, incredibly enough ...r a development on this scale, the entire ...deo business is quite illegal: the prints are ...ated copies, the video theatres do not have ...cence to show films, and pay no entertain-...nt tax. Most of them resort to the transpa-...nt ploy of a cover charge for tea or snacks, ...d that the video showing is "free". But this ...ols no one, and the threat to the film indu-...y is very real.

All eight of Jodhpur's video-cafes are ...most exactly opposite or very close to the ...nema hall Minerva, an old establishment ...ased for fancy renovation, and due to open ...th a showing of *Jaani Dost* next month. ...st fortnight, however, the Ganga Jamuna ...deo-cafe exactly opposite was entering its ...cond week with that multi-starrer, and ...elody cafe, only a little way down the road, ...owed the same film, as did other video-...eatres in the town. Said Minerva's mana-...r: "We had planned to inaugurate our hall ...th *Jaani Dost*, but after 800 to 1,000 people ...ve been seeing the film daily for the past ...ek at these video-cafes, we really don't know what sort of market will be left."

Though Hollywood has a much smaller presence in the country, the pirated showing of western video films is as much of a reality. Most of the films that contended for this year's Oscars are already available on the domestic video circuit, though none of them other than *Gandhi* have formally entered the country's cinema theatres. *Tootsie, Missing, Gandhi* itself, and *ET-The Extra Terrestrial* are freely available at video libraries, along with such global hits as *Victor/Victoria* and *An Officer and a Gentleman*. Last month's

Sharma: enterprise

Vachani: troubled

Oscar awards ceremony in Los Angeles, where *Gandhi* won eight Oscars, is also available on video.

Dennis Pereira, who represents the major Hollywood companies in India, is both worried and angry: "These films are pirated, and the video theatres that show them have no licence under the Cinematography Act; they have not been vetted by the local authorities for safety and hygiene; the organisers of this business have not paid the excise duty on the films, and do not pay the entertainment tax to the state; above all, they have not paid copyright fees to the people who own the films. They are violating every law that governs the business."

Protecting Interests: Though some in the business reason that video shows will not whittle down cinema audiences—that they will, instead, whet the appetite for wide-screen experience, a confrontation is inevitably building up. Last month, sub-committees of the various producer, distributor and exhibitor associations were feverishly looking for ways to counter the assault on their markets. Amit Khanna, an independent film producer and lyric writer who chairs the Copyright Protection Committee of the All India Film Producers' Council, says: "We are now trying to work out an organised system for marketing video rights which will protect the film industry's interests, and at the same time use this tremendous technology to the advantage of both the producer and viewer."

This clearly marks a change of tack, for the Council had earlier banned video prints of films in India, and then decided to allow them only for films over five years old. Esquire's thrust into legal video prints, distributed through organised channels, is one result of the new strategy, with the prints being made at the National Film Development Corporation's (NFDC) recording centre in Madras, started in August last year. The NFDC, according to chairman D.V.S. Raju, has so far made video prints of 150 feature films, 62 of them for private parties and the rest for Doordarshan and the NFDC itself. Others like Hira are making a similar effort to capture the Indian video market.

Meanwhile, the unauthorised operators were being attacked through a string of writ petitions and criminal complaints in virtually every state in the country. In the Bombay High Court, producer-distributor Gulshan Rai managed to get a court order preventing the showing of adult films to minors at restaurants and cafes. More effective action came in a ruling of the Jabalpur High Court, which ruled at the end of April that video is cinema, arguing that the business of charging exorbitantly for tea and snacks while showing video films was obviously a cover-up ploy. And in Patna, the Bihar Government issued a press note warning those showing VCR films to get their sets registered and pay the entertainment tax.

Pereira argues that even the showing of films in hotel rooms violates copyright laws, and says he got an outfit organising the programmes in the Maurya-Sheraton in Delhi to withdraw its services. Most other hotels, however, are going merrily ahead with video installations and programmes.

Official Move: The Central Government is only now getting into the act. In the

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Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, both the Minister of State H.K.L. Bhagat and Secretary S.S. Gill issued warnings of strong action, and asked the industry for suggestions on how to stop the piracy and unauthorised showings. But this indicated nothing more than a delayed awareness that a problem existed.

On another front, the domestic VCR manufacturers and dealers are lobbying for an end to the low-duty import of VCR's, which as Prem Vachani of Weston argues, is "helping the industry of other countries and killing our own. I pay a higher duty for importing components for my VCR's than those who bring in the finished product." Others have suffered in a similar fashion. The staid British Physical Laboratory in Bangalore, manufacturers for more than 20 years of professional electronic equipment, decided to cash in on the video boom last year and set up two factories at Palghat and Bangalore. Two thousand sets were quickly sold out but now, with liberal imports, the bottom has dropped out of the market.

Others are critical of the organised business that now exists in getting passengers to visit a neighbouring country (Sri Lanka and Singapore are two favourite destinations) and bring back a VCR. Given the Rs 5,000 premium that a VCR still commands in the open market, importing videos has become another flourishing form of enterprise.

Corrective action on some of these fronts could well make the video wave lose some of its present momentum, incredible as it is; but few believe that it will fizzle out. Piracy is a world-wide phenomenon that even the advanced countries have been unable to successfully tackle. And the Central and state governments will find it difficult to crack down effectively on the video theatres and cafes that are rapidly becoming a major form of mass entertainment. It seems inevitable that both the film industry as well as government will have to come to terms with video, instead of trying to curb its growth and spread.

Behavioural Problems: If video is here to stay, what is it likely to do to the millions it holds in its grip, especially women and children? Bangalore housewife Sudha Prakash, hooked onto video like so many others, found that her seven-year-old daughter Shruthika was complaining of reduced parental attention. Many parents are anxious that their children don't read any more. And those who look around for films that have some educational value for their children find it difficult to get them.

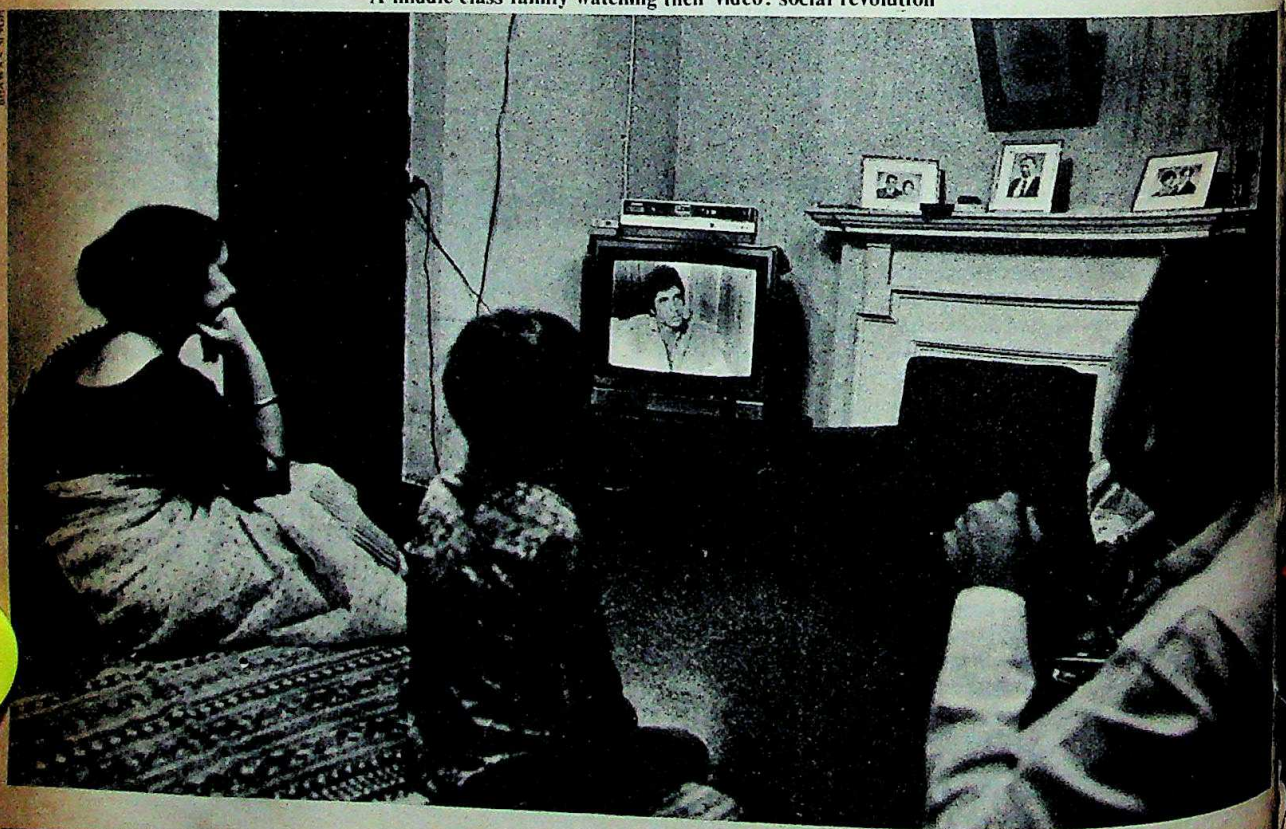
Everywhere, the staple fare is the Bombay film world's mishmash of violence, bloodshed and rape. Women who watch these films could well get brainwashed by the film world's projection of women as passive creatures who are helpless objects of violence. And children who get addicted to Superman and mindless American mass culture could just as easily be subjected to an insidious cultural invasion of their basic perceptions.

Psychiatrists are frankly worried. Says S. Dubey, a psychiatrist at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi: "This is a passive form of recreation for children and unhealthy in large doses. Constant viewing leaves them with stunted imaginations and an unbalanced perspective on most issues." Dubey also feels that Hindi films are insincere in projecting what they term social messages, that they constantly employ sensual stimulation, and that addicts "always suffer from a personality problem". Even Gurpreet Singh, who runs the Gaytime video library in Delhi, comes up quite unconsciously with an apt comment: "It's like a disease. This video craze is spreading like a disease."

But for those who are hooked to it, such considerations are immaterial. The VCR lying in the corner of the room is status symbol, instant entertainment, answer to boredom, basis for social contact. Why criticise nirvana?

—T.N. NINAN with
CHANDER UDAY SINGH and bureau reports

A middle class family watching their video: social revolution



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Holding hands
and feet in the sand...

Now's the time for a Thril

ere's nothing like a THRIL
From McDowell

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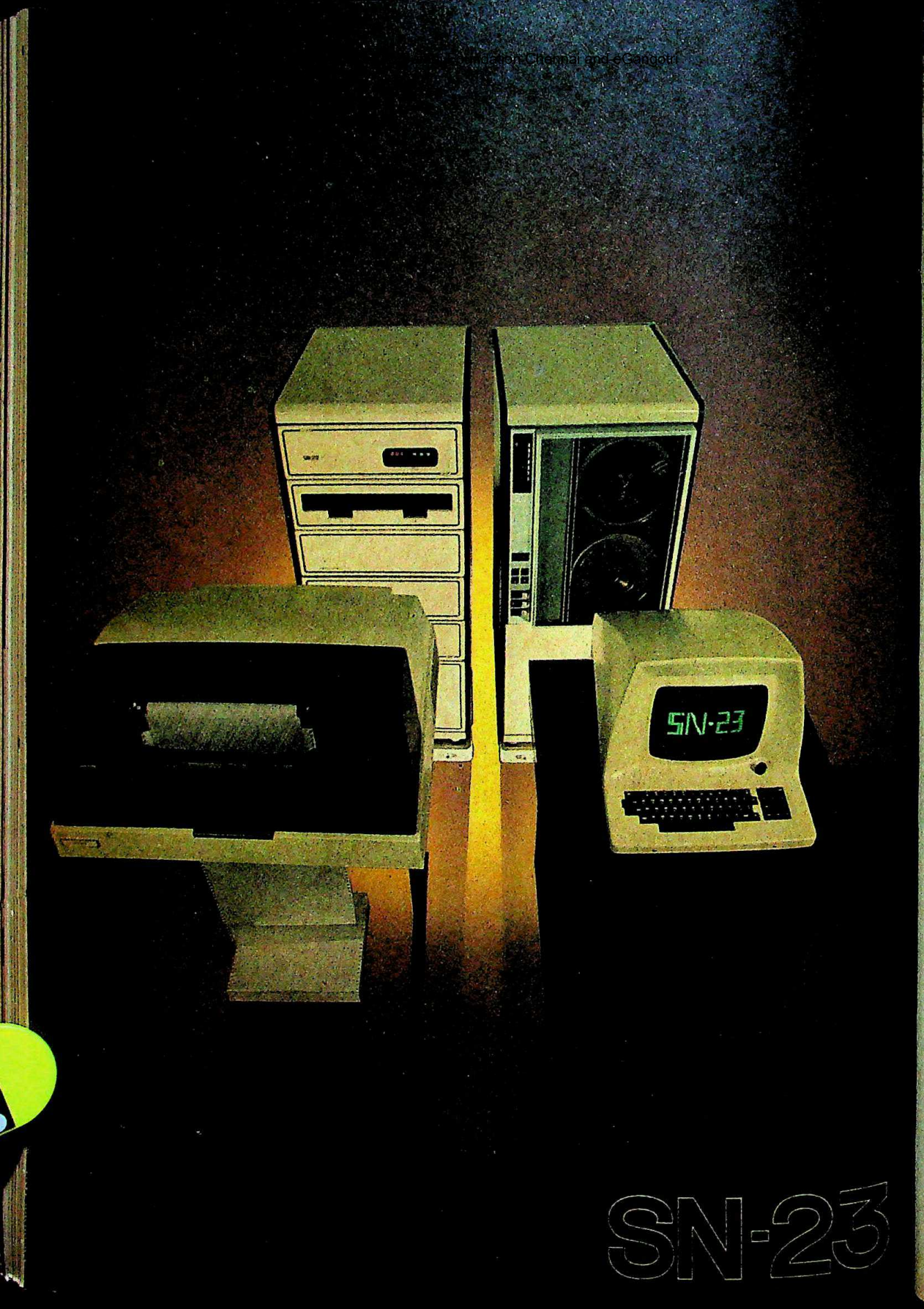

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WEST BENGAL

Marxist Message

THE MARXIST interpretation of history has provoked more than its share of controversy. In West Bengal, the state Government, which is dominated by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), is pushing through widespread changes in the educational policy of the state, especially in the history syllabus in schools. This has sparked off vehement protests from intellectuals and others that the Marxists are subverting the educational system. DR AMIT MITRA *reports:*

BENGAL, which could at one time boast of being one of India's leading centres of learning is now embroiled in a deep controversy over its system of education. The Left Front Government has introduced sweeping policy changes in the educational system of the state. The two controversial aspects of these changes revolve around the question as to who will control and administer the 10,000 schools and 400 colleges of Bengal and what exactly will be taught in these institutions of learning. While the first aspect threatens to disrupt the educational system through factional squabbles, the second has culminated in a unique legal battle over the history syllabus for the children of class VIII, now pending in the Supreme Court.

A large section of the intellectuals, educationists, jurists and literati of the state are, however, concerned that under these cosmetic changes the CPI-M has, in fact, embarked on a calculated path to "disinform" the schoolchildren of West Bengal, capture the administration of educational institutions for the furtherance of their party objectives and intimidate the 'non-believers' into a permanent culture of silence.

Political Criticism: Anila Debi, a CPI-M leader in the field of education and now the president of the Council of Higher Secondary Education of the state regrets that the criticisms being levied against their government "are born out of political motives rather than objective analysis". However, Shankar Prasad Mitra, former chief justice of the Calcutta High Court and now an independent member of the Rajya Sabha states that the CPI-M Government must expect political criticism as "the principal objective of the CPI-M Government is to politicise education in the state and use the educational institutions for their narrow party interests. The changes in the syllabi of primary and secondary schools fit into this overall pattern".

The *bhadralok* of West Bengal came to question the motives of the Left Front Government when it was learnt that plans were afoot to remove *Sahaj Path* from the primary school syllabus. *Sahaj Path* had been written for the children of West Bengal by Rabindranath Tagore. Rumours of its removal brought hundreds of educationists, novelists, poets and intellectuals of Bengal out on the streets of Calcutta in loud protest. Perhaps moved by this emotional outburst that had already percolated to the average middle class Bengali, the Government announced the retention of *Sahaj Path* in the primary school syllabus. But it did so after supplementing it with a "more scientific" text.

This controversy, in fact, heralded the application of the Marxian "class analysis" to the content of the school syllabi in Bengal. A little noticed government publication defending the policy on the *Sahaj Path* put it clearly: ".... this book (*Sahaj Path*) cannot be deemed suitable for young children belonging to educationally backward classes in our country .... " Similar ideological concern was to spread to the material in the syllabi of the secondary schools of the state.

Significant Circulars: The controversy over the secondary school syllabi in West Bengal has just reached the Supreme Court of India and is expected to brew for a long time to come. Two seemingly innocuous circulars issued by the secretary of the Board of Secondary Education towards the end of 1978 proved to be the starting point of a long and gruelling battle. Through these circulars the heads of junior high and high schools were summarily informed of a changed syllabus in history for the class VI students, together with forewarnings of probable changes in the history syllabus in the higher classes.

COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT'S CHANGE IN HISTORY SYLLABI

	1974 syllabus BY PAGES IND: INT*	NCERT syllabus BY LESSONS IND INT*	Revised syllabus BY PAGES IND: INT*
Class VI	108:20	70:5	18:74
Class VII	124:6	60:1	29:81
Class VIII	125:25	80:10	40:95
TOTAL	357:51	210:25	87:248
RATIO OF IND:INT*	7:1	8:1	1:3

*IND INDIAN. INT INTERNATIONAL.

Only with the release of the revised syllabus for class VIII in 1981 did the underlying pattern of changes become apparent. Clearly, the importance of Indian history and particularly that of the freedom movement had been reduced drastically in favour of international history and particularly the Bolshevik and the Chinese revolutions. While the proportionate share of India's history in the old syllabus was 85 per cent, its representation in the newly revised syllabus for classes VI to VIII had fallen to a mere 26 per cent.

On the other hand, international history, which constituted 15 per cent of the old syllabi now comprises 75 per cent of the history course. These changes indicate complete disregard for the guidelines set by the National Council of Educational Research & Training of the Central Government.

Curiously, the revised syllabi introduced new and minute details of the Reformation Movement in Europe but deleted the history of the reformation movement in India. For example the 12 and 13 year olds in the schools of West Bengal will now learn in depth about the "teachings and actions of John Wycliff of Oxford, John Huss of Prague and Martin Luther of Wittenberg", but will not know any more of the history of their contemporary reformers in India like that of Chaitanya in Bengal, Kabir in Maharashtra, Ramananda in Uttar Pradesh and Guru Nanak of Punjab.

European Bias: The children will learn of the details of the "Religious war in the Holy Roman Empire between the League of Protestant States and Emperor Charles V (1545–1555)", but may never hear of the first and second battles of Panipat (1526, 1556). They will learn of "Feudalism in Europe" through 16 pages of their textbook in class VII, but will have to rush through 3000 years of Indian history (1206-1526) in only six pages. Worse still, they will miss out entirely on a section of ancient and medieval Indian history covering over 1,000 years (post Gupta Empire to the Delhi Sultanate) since this part has been dropped entirely.

However, the most disturbing aspect of these changes in the history syllabi relate to that of class VIII which covers the modern period. Critics point out that separate sections in the revised syllabus have been specified for Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and Mao Zedong. In fact, the life of Mao spans over five specified periods within a large section entitled the "Revolution in China".

On the other hand, the names of Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and

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> *"The principal objective of the CPI-M Government is to politicise education in the state and use the educational institutions for their narrow party interests. The changes in the syllabi of primary and secondary schools fits into this overall pattern."*
>
> —Shankar Prasad Mitra,
>
> former chief justice, Calcutta High Court

...ar Patel have been simply ...ed. Similarly the names ... the history relating to ... Aurobindo, Lala Lajpat ...k, Deshbandhu Chittaran... Abul Kalam Azad and ...ul Gaffar Khan have all ... dropped during the pro... of the 'revision'.

The available space has ... filled by the history of the ...g March of the Commu... ...s in North-West China, the ...-Fu incident of 1936 to ...g Chiang and Mao together ... the Civil War between the ...mintang and Communists ...; (driving ... of) Chiang and his forces ... ;... (unifica... of) China under Mao's control in Octo... 1949". Sun Yat-Sen and Yuan Shi-Kai ... also been allocated a few independent ...ions. Of course, the Bolshevik Revolu... in the Soviet Union spans over a large ... in the revised syllabus, focusing on the ... 3 year old... ...ses and impact of this revolution on ...rope and the world. Included in the pro... ...epth about... of 'revision' is the history of the revolu... ...actions o... in 'South-East Asia' led by Ho Chi ...ford, John... ...h.

nd Martin... **Historic Struggle:** Bishnubrata Bhatta... ...g", but wi... ...rya, the president of the West Bengal ...f the histo... ...admasters' Association candidly calls the ...rary refor... ...sed syllabi "an ingenious aggression on ...at of Chai... ...ian culture, Indian nationalism and on ...bir in Ma... Indian struggle for freedom". This, he ...da in Utta... ..., is manifest in the deletions of major ... Nanak ... ...ions of the culturally rich periods of ...ian history, the ancient and the medieval. ... The chi... ...ilar intent is evident in the deletion of the ...e details o... ...ory of all social reform movements ...n the Hol... ...in India and the highlighting of those el... ...gue of Pro... ...ere in the world. The biased treatment ...Charles ... ...ed out to the history of India's freedom ...ear of th... ...ggle in which the role of the Indian com... ...ipat (152... ...ists was rather unenviable clearly speaks ...lism in E... ...itself, says Bhattacharya.

...extbook ... The veteran Gandhian leader and for... ...hrough 30... ...chief minister of West Bengal, Prafulla ...26) in o... ...andra Sen put it in a similar ...ss out en... ...t: "The Left Front Govern... ...d mediev... ...t dominated by the CPI-M is ...,000 year... ...g to brainwash the school ...Sultanat... ...college boys and girls in a ...entirely ...ner which will be evident ...g aspect ... ...n the syllabi which they ...bi relate t... ...e prepared."

...he moder... Answering the charges of ...parate se... ...critics, Bhabesh Moitra, the ...been spe... ...rman of the West Bengal ...Engels a... ...ondary Board of Education ...Mao spa... ...and sometime CPI-M party ca... ...a large s... ...admitted that Indian ...China". ...tory has been drastically re... ...es of Ja... ...ced in the syllabi for classes ...Bose a... ...to VIII. However, he insisted that this has been done with the idea of reorganising the entire secondary and higher secondary teaching of history. "The Board is of the view that Indian history must be understood in the context of the history of the world. Therefore, the children are being exposed relatively more to the history of the world in classes VI to VIII and then to the history of India in classes IX and X." Moitra, however, could not make available the syllabi of classes IX to X to fully substantiate this view as "they are still being discussed and revised".

THE PRESIDENT of the Headmasters' Association explains why they are so vehemently opposed to the drastic reduction of Indian history in classes VI to VIII, even if one is to believe that it is being added in classes IX and X: "The drop-out rate among the poorer students of the state peaks at class VIII, that being the minimum requirement for admissions to the industrial training centres and for all the category IV jobs in the public and private sector. Therefore, these drop-outs from class VIII, who would ultimately fill our factories and offices, forming the core of the so-called 'proletariat' in the state, will have little or no knowledge of Indian history.

In order to stop this highly controversial syllabus of history of class VIII from coming into effect, the West Bengal Headmasters' Association moved the Calcutta High Court, pleading that the syllabus be struck down. The grounds for this plea rested on the alleged violation of Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution of India (freedom of speech and expression) and the violation of the statutes of the Board of Secondary Education by its own officers during the framing of the revised syllabus. In a historic judgement on March 26 1982, Justice B.C. Roy of the Calcutta High Court struck down the syllabus on the grounds of violation of fundamental rights.

Legal Trail: However, the division bench of the same high court soon reversed Justice Roy's decision relating to the issue of violation of the provisions of the Constitution, nevertheless striking down the syllabus on the grounds of violation of the statutes of the Board by its own officers. Justice M.M. Dutt and Justice M.K. Mukerjee were unanimous that "the impunged syllabus is, therefore, illegal in as much as it has been made without following the legal procedure". The Board of Secondary Education of the West Bengal Government retaliated by appealing to the Supreme Court.

On April 22, 1983, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case at a future date but refused to issue a stay order against the verdict of the division bench which had declared the syllabus illegal. Curiously, in a rare gesture of concern for the students of class VIII in West Bengal, the Supreme Court allowed the use of any history textbook during the current academic session provided the book had been approved by the Board at any time in the past. The controversy hangs in mid-air right now, with both sides digging in for a long court battle.

Controversial Policy: Dividing the teachers of West Bengal is another controversy which grew out of the educational policy of the Left Front Government. The CPI-M opponents allege that the Government is making a concerted effort to eliminate the intellectuals, educationists and administrative bodies of the schools, colleges, and univerisities in the state. Independent-minded academics, say the critics, have been replaced by party cadres who are expected to follow the directives from the top, particularly in the area of recruitment of teachers and employees.

The modus operandi has

> *"The Left Front Government dominated by the CPI-M is trying to brainwash the school and college boys and girls in a manner which will be evident from the syllabi which they have prepared."*
>
> —Prafulla Chandra Sen,
>
> former chief minister, West Bengal

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"The Board is of the view that Indian history must be understood in the context of the history of the world. Therefore, the children are being exposed relatively more to the history of the world in classes VI to VIII and then to the history of India in classes IX and X."

—Bhabesh Moitra,

chairman, West Bengal Board of Secondary Education

been to first supersede or dissolve school managing committees, college governing bodies and university councils. Statistics reveal that as many as 1,808 school managing committees have been dissolved in the state over the last four years. Over 50 governing bodies of sponsored colleges have also been dissolved and *ad hoc* bodies imposed. Where the governing bodies of the colleges have not been dissolved, the four nominees of the Government and the university council have been replaced. Such tampering has occurred in the governing bodies of 200 colleges.

The nominees were replaced by party cadres whose academic credentials hardly matched those of their predecessors. It is this disparity which gave credence to the allegation that the new nominees were selected purely on political grounds. Among numerous cases, a typical example is that of the nominations to the governing body of Kanchrapara College in the district of 24 Parganas. Jagdish Chandra Das, a matriculate and a CPI-M MLA replaced Dr Haridas Gupta, principal of the R.B.C. College. Nabakumar Nandi, a lecturer and well-known CPI-M activist replaced Dr G.K. Manna, head of the Department of Zoology and dean of the Faculty of Science at Kalyani University. An assistant schoolteacher, Priti Bhattacharya, a CPI-M activist replaced Dr Mira Sen, a well-known botanist and senior reader at the Kalyani University. Dr Jagannath Mukerjee, a lecturer and CPI-M activist took the place of Professor K.P. Choudhury, the head and dean of the Faculty of Education of the same university.

But the most glaring of such cases reported in a section of the media in the state was that of a non-matriculate ration shop owner who was nominated to the governing body of the Shobharani Memorial College. This nomination had to be withdrawn following a hue and cry raised by the West Bengal (College) Principals Association.

Infighting: The politicisation of nominations to college governing bodies have, in some cases, led to intense infighting between Left Front partners or within different factions of the CPI-M. This has produced chaotic conditions in certain colleges of the state. For example, the Ranaghat College in the Nadia district is currently plagued by factional infighting between the two CPI-M nominees to its governing body. Gour Kundu, CPI-M MLA, is locked in a day-to-day administrative battle with Niren Sengupta, a CPI-M leader and lecturer of Santipur College. The situation deteriorated to such a degree that the CPI-M-led government had to dissolve the entire governing body and hand over the charge of the college to the local subdivisional officer who in turn, was compelled to close down the college indefinitely.

Similar to the case of colleges, many schools of West Bengal are labouring under the weight of the CPI-M's alleged policy of 'capture and control'. The secretary of the superseded managing committee of the Kalighat Oriental School, Rathin Talukdar, explains emotionally: "Will you believe that we have no teacher of mathematics for the past seven months, what with all the mathematics graduates going without jobs in the state? We are helpless under the new rules which require that every single appointment be processed through the massive government bureaucracy, and unofficially be counter-checked by a CPI-M party functionary."

Political Control: Bhabesh Moitra defends the supersession and dissolution of the administrative bodies of the educational institutions in the state on the grounds of "rampant financial mismanagement and administrative bungling by such bodies". This could well be a valid cause for the dissolving of some of the school managing committees in the state. But an ulterior motive is being read into such actions when almost 2,000 school committees stand dissolved.

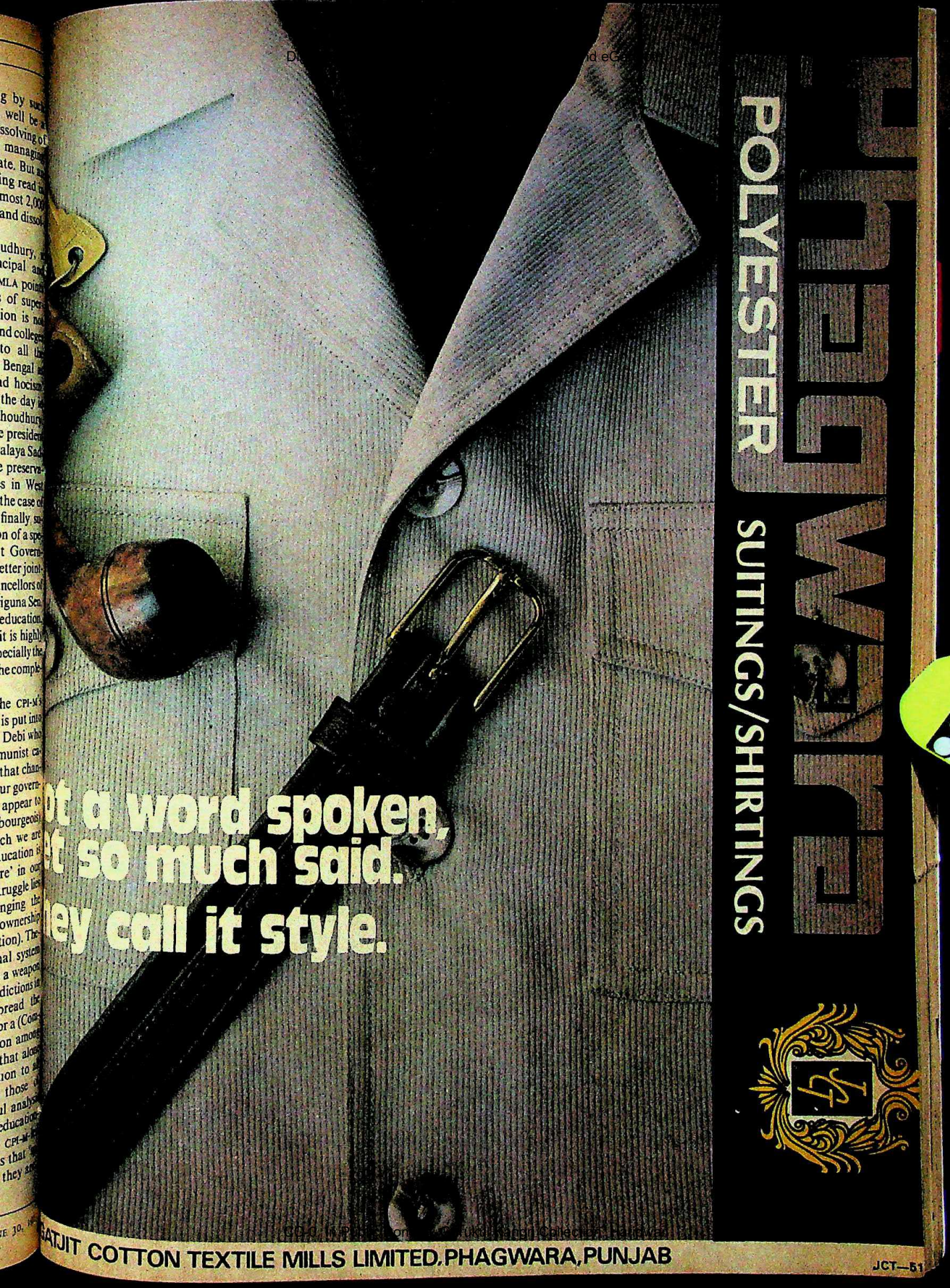
Dr Kiran Choudhury, a former college principal and now a Congress (I) MLA points out that the process of supersession and dissolution is not confined to schools and colleges alone but extends to all the seven state universities of West Bengal as well. "CPI-M's control through 'ad hocism' and nominations is the order of the day in West Bengal today," says Dr Choudhury. Agreeing with Dr Choudhury, the president of the Paschim Banga Viswa Vidyalaya Sachivhikar Samithy (committee for the preservation of autonomy of universities in West Bengal) Dr Sukumar Dutta cited the case of Jadavpur University which was finally superseded through the promulgation of a special ordinance by the Left Front Government. Dr Dutta quoted a unique letter jointly written by seven former vice chancellors of Jadavpur University, including Triguna Sen, the former Union minister of education, which said unambiguously that "it is highly undesirable that education and especially the universities should remain under the complete control of the Government".

The real objective behind the CPI-M's controversial educational policies is put into a theoretical perspective by Anila Debi who has completed 40 years of communist candreship: "It must be understood that changes in the educational policies of our government, however radical they may appear to our critics, cannot rise above the (bourgeois) economic framework within which we are compelled to function today. Education is only a part of the 'superstructure' in our (Marxist) language and the real struggle lies in permanently changing the economic base (of ownership and means of production). Therefore, the educational system can at best be used as a weapon to sharpen the contradictions in this society and spread the message of the need for a (Communist) transformation among the common man—that alone being the only solution to all problems including those of education." A careful analysis of the changes in the educational policies by the CPI-M-led Government indicates that 'reading the message' they are

"CPI-M's control through 'ad hocism' and nominations is the order of the day in West Bengal today."

—Dr Kiran Choudhury,

former college principal, now Congress(I) MLA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WOMEN

The Rape Rap

FIVE years ago their efforts began in earnest. Every two hours a woman was getting raped in India and something had to be done. Two years and no response later, the women launched a national stir. Irked by judicial semantic jugglery and public apathy, they demonstrated in the streets of New Delhi and Bombay chanting:

Supreme Court, Supreme Court,
Against you, where can we report?

Someone heard. Last week, in an important ruling on the controversial rape law, the Supreme Court said that the uncorroborated testimony of a rape victim should not be ordinarily doubted if it did not suffer from any "basic infirmity" that rendered it unworthy of acceptance. Simply stated, this means that a woman who has been raped can ask for justice without first having to prove that she was raped.

"Why should the evidence of a girl who complains of sexual molestation be viewed with the aid of spectacles fitted with lenses tinged with doubt, disbelief or suspicion? To do so is to justify the charge of male chauvinism in a male dominated society," the judgement says. "In a society like ours, it is very unlikely that a woman falsely alleges rape because even at the age of 10 or 12, a girl in India is aware of the implications of making such a charge," said Justice M.P. Thakkar, who along with Justice A.N. Sen delivered the judgement.

Key Verdict: Lucid and brief, the judgement is a landmark, and a vindication of the struggle of women to get the rape laws amended. In this particular case, B.B. Harjibhai, a government employee in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, was convicted of assaulting two children aged 10 and 12 years. One girl escaped, but the other, according to medical evidence, was assaulted. The parents of the two girls wanted to hush up the matter but Kundaben, a local social worker took up the cause. Leading 500 women, she marched to Harjibhai's house and demanded an apology. When he refused, a criminal case was filed against him. He was convicted by the sessions court and the high court. He appealed to the Supreme Court. "This case necessitated an elaborate scanning of the jurisprudential sky through the lenses of 'logos' and 'ethos'," Justice Thakkar said.

"This judgement highlights two things," said Kapila Hingorani, advocate, Supreme Court. "One is the pivotal role that women's organisations have played in bringing about this change in attitude. In the Mathura case, when I was going to file a review petition on behalf of four women's organisations, I was told to take the matter to the Boat Club (an all-time favourite for demonstrations in Delhi) and not bring it to the Supreme Court. Now the Supreme Court itself has come out with a judgement supporting our cause."

Important Case: The debate about rape has raged in the country since 1977 when wo-

HAMU OM GULATI

Justice Thakkar: landmark judgement

men's groups rallied in outrage over what has popularly come to be known as the "Mathura rape case". In that case, the Supreme Court had acquitted two constables convicted for rape by the Bombay High Court. Tukaram and Ganpat were charged with raping Mathura, a minor, in a police station in Desaiganj, Chandrapur district, Maharashtra. By letting them go scot-free, the Supreme Court inferred consent on Mathura's part and the country's highest judicial office made itself a subject of controversy.

Women's organisations had demanded a reopening of the Mathura case and though the Supreme Court dismissed the review petition on technical grounds of the delay, national attention had been focussed on atrocities against women and the loopholes in the legal system. "This latest judgement is a victory for us and it is very radical. Justice Thakkar has understood the problem well because it reveals great psychological insights," said Subhadra Butalia, feminist-activist.

Thakkar's judgement tailors a legal principle from more permissive societies to suit local conditions. The judgement said that the problem has special significance for women in India because, though they have been worshipped and idolised, they have also been exploited and denied even-handed justice. Before this judgement, activists f that their position was untenable. As stands today, the law requires that t woman prove that she did not consent to t sexual act. Thus, she has either to inv injury and possible death by resisting order to prove rape in court, or submit to h miliation and torture.

Faulty Bill: As a result of the pub debate, the Government referred question to a Law Commission, specia constituted to propose amendments to existing laws. Acting on the commission's port, a Criminal Law Amendment Bill w introduced in Parliament in 1980. Consens on the bill in Parliament is that it is a to wash-out designed merely to show that t Government is sensitive to women's pr blems. In fact, the bill ignores almost all t major recommendations of the Law Co mission. For instance:

► The bill does not consider rape und economic duress.

► It is vague about the age of consent ev though the Law Commission sets it at years.

► The bill is silent on the need for imm diate medical check-up.

► It makes no mention of the fact that t commission has recommended that victim should be interrogated at home by policewoman.

"The latest Supreme Court judgeme has pre-empted the Government and we a grateful for that," said Pramila Dandavat MP, Lok Sabha. She too feels that the pe ding bill is a farce especially when it talks "in camera" trials. According to her, if a tri is held 'in camera', nobody would kno what really took place and this immuni

Sudha (left) and Lakshman Kumar (second

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be misused by people in power to keep
ts from the public.

Meanwhile, in a separate rape case, the
me Court last week ruled that non-pro-
n of medical evidence concerning rape
r women living in remote areas is not
ary for conviction. "The new judge-
s a definite step forward from the Su-
Court decision in the Mathura case
incorporates some of the new thinking
subject which has been advocated by
n's organisations," said Chayya Datta
Srimukti Sangathana, Bombay.
onsidered by many to be the first posi-
ep toward curtailing violence against
n, the judgement comes at a time when
ies against women make headlines
day. It is a long way from the days
a Supreme Court justice said that
n who dress provocatively deserve to
ed. Even as the Government prevari-
over the bill, the Supreme Court has
the powers that be that much-needed

MEANWHILE, the women's move-
ment in the country had scored a
notable victory in its fight against
deaths thanks to another judicial
ent recently handed down. For the
ne the accused in a bride-burning case
n awarded the death penalty. It is also
t time a woman has been sentenced to
by a Delhi court. But this is not the
ne a bride has been burnt to death.
his will not be the last. Even as news
the sentence was making the rounds in
Delhi, reports about brides being burnt
oming in. In that week alone, 10 brides
onsigned to flames—alive.

Justice S.M. Aggarwal in his capacity as additional sessions judge directed that Lakshman Kumar, a shopkeeper, his elder brother Subhash Chander, a schoolteacher, and their mother Shakuntala Devi be hanged for the pre-meditated, well-planned and diabolical murder of Sudha, 21, on December 1, 1980. Married to Lakshman Kumar for less than a year, Sudha was nine months pregnant at the time of her murder. "The Supreme Court has made it quite difficult to award death sentences, but this murder is so revolting that it fulfils all the conditions," Aggarwal said. "It ranks among the rarest cases of murder, and rarest among the rare, so far as the category of bride-burning cases is concerned, which is assuming menacing proportions these days," he added.

Grisly Act: It certainly is not a rarity anymore, to hear of brides being burnt, especially in Delhi where reported cases of bride-burning reached an alarming 610 in 1982, the highest in the country. Women's organisations feel that the very fact that it is referred to as "nothing new" is a pointer to the apathy that has successfully corroded public protest over what is most certainly a grisly act.

But, Sudha's murder was most foul. Within a month of her marriage, the three accused and other members of their family began ill-treating her. Then followed the familiar scene—insults, abuses and demands for more money. "She was soon to have a baby and the in-laws felt that she would have to be killed before that because with a baby, Lakshman's chances of remarriage would diminish considerably," Aggarwal said.

What followed was bizarre. The accused poured kerosene on Sudha and set her ablaze in the rear enclosed courtyard of their house. Attracted by the cries, the neighbours rushed in and tried to put out the flames while the accused stood by watching. "When I got near the house, I saw Lakshman closing the door so that no one could enter," said Jaspal Singh Oberoi, one of the witnesses. "The brother-in-law was holding the inner door shut and I had to push him aside to enter the courtyard," said Satish Chopra, another neighbour. Sudha had suffered 70 per cent burns when she was brought out and as soon as she saw her mother-in-law, she screamed: "She poured kerosene over me and set me on fire."

Suspect Statement: The neighbours suspected foul play when they found out next morning that Sudha, in her dying declaration had stated that her death was due to an accident. "When she left for the hospital, she was accusing members of her family for setting her on fire—how did her statement change so drastically, and it was this question that led us to register a case," said Tarsem Jain, an eyewitness.

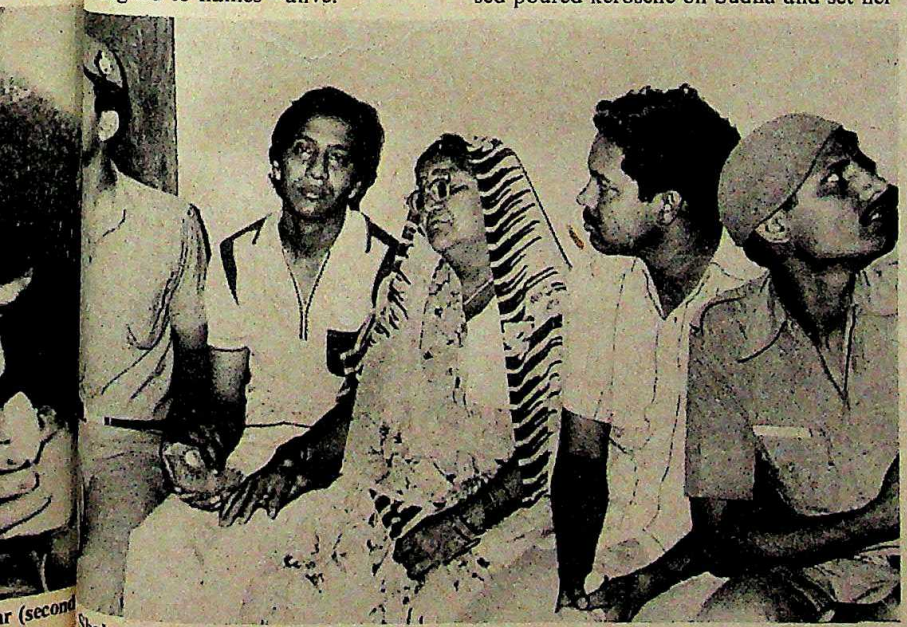
"There was a lot of foul play because the sub-inspector and a senior surgeon colluded with the family to fabricate what they insisted was Sudha's dying statement," Aggarwal said. Apparently, the surgeon had written, "Attested. The recorded statement" on the statement, thus granting credence to the suspicion that it was not done in his presence.

Besides, the investigation revealed incriminating evidence, all pointing to murder. The judge also expressed the hope that the police commissioner would initiate appropriate follow-up action against the investigating officer Sub-Inspector Sukhvinder Singh and Dr J. Joseph of St Stephen's Hospital for tampering with evidence.

Social Sickness: Though no one has been able to pin-point the real cause for bride-burning, unhappiness over inadequate dowry is considered a major factor. Parliament passed an anti-dowry act in 1961 but that has contributed little. However, laws and legislation can play but a small part in arresting what is essentially a social evil.

When 23-year-old Padmavati of East Delhi married last month, she walked into a death-trap. A month later she died of burns and the police arrested her in-laws, registering a case of murder. In the first show of public strength and sympathy, the residents protested outside the police station and demanded justice. Emotions ran high and the demonstration turned violent, so much so that Padmavati had to be cremated under police protection. The demonstration was obviously to make the belated point that enough was enough.

—CHITRA SUBRAMANIAM



Shakuntala Devi and Subhash Chander flanked by policemen: just punishment

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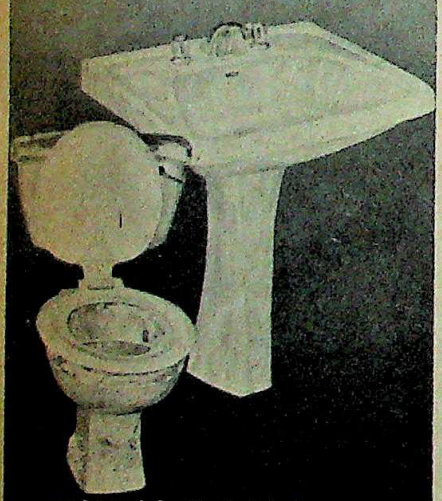

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GUJARAT

Bypassing The Buck

SPAWNING a trail of controversies in its path, the Madhavsinh Solanki Government in Gujarat seems to have entangled itself in yet another whirlpool. Armed with the Agricultural Land Ceiling Act (ALCA), the Revenue Department of the state Government is poised to wipe out in one fell stroke a tiny population of over 300 blackbucks, an endangered species, settled on the natural reserve at Dhaniavi Bid, about 11 km from the industrial town of Baroda. The reserve is expected to be converted to farmland, ostensibly for landless labourers.

The preserve spread over 300 acres of virgin scrub, surrounded by strong fencing, has been assiduously protected by its owners, the Maharaja Fatehsinhrao Zoo Trust, a Baroda-based charitable trust. But under instructions from the Baroda district collector, 264 acres out of the 300 acres have been declared "excess" land and the Trust has been asked to hand it over to the state Government. If and when the transaction takes place, it will be a painful parting for the trustees, especially Fatehsinhrao Gaekwad, the chairman of the Trust and the president of the World Wildlife Fund in India.

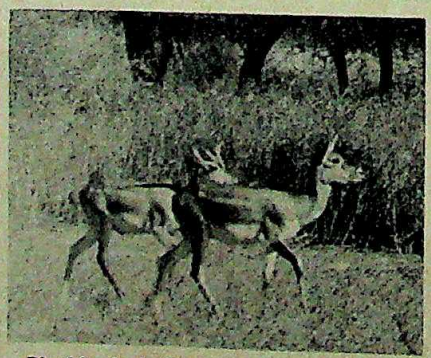
The trustees of the preserve have been under considerable political pressure to relinquish the land since 1970, when they received a *suo moto* notice from the local mamlatdar's office. Subsequent legal representations by the Trust drew a blank. In their determination to save the lives of the hapless blackbucks, they moved the Gujarat High Court, pleading for an exemption from the ALCA application.

Disclosure: With the legal battle in full swing and a campaign launched by committed naturalists, coupled with a blazing media splash, the officials of the Revenue Department were put on the defensive. In August 1981, the officials disclosed that the preserve, once taken ov would be handed over to the state's Fore Department and that all effort would made to preserve the blackbucks.

But indignant trustees pointed out this juncture that the state Gover ment's decision overlooked an obvio loophole; if the habitat land (offici ly classified as agricultural land) w taken over under the ALCA, it would, u der the very provisions of the act, be us only for cultivational purposes. The co sequence: depriving the blackbucks their habitat. Said M.A. Rashid, t state's former special forest conservat (wildlife): "The Trust and Gaekwad, particular, have not created the blac bucks. If the Trust had any real conce for the animals, it would certainly ha developed the preserve into a sanctua instead of leaving them to the vagaries nature." Rashid stressed that the sta Government had ample resources to ca for the blackbucks and "also make them major tourist attraction".

The Trust, however, counters the arguments by maintaining that they a refraining from spending their resourc on the land which might fall into the sta Government's hands. Said R.S. Pawar, t secretary of the Trust: "We spend near Rs 45,000 a year on the upkeep of th preserve. This includes the pitifully lo wages we pay to our guards. We cann possibly make any capital investment developing the preserve unless we kno for sure it will remain in our possession."

Strangely, dissenting voices from th World Wildlife Fund leaders at the Unite Nations and conversely the Gujarat Hig Court ruling that the land should be ha ded over to the Forest Department h contributed little to the inaction of th state Government, who have yet to fo mally take over the land. However, a pos High Court order has offered a glimmer hope. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 198 passed by Parliament forbids any ac even by a government, that goes again the conservation of rare species of flo and fauna. The blackbucks are official listed as one of the rare species of Gujar under the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) The trustees hope to invoke the provisio of the Forest Act to save the blackbuck "But," as the indignant Dr G.M. Oza, Baroda-based wildlife expert put it, "on a strong public opinion can save these gr cious creatures from the doom spelt by heartless bureaucracy."—PRAMOD PAGEDA



Blackbucks in Dhaniavi Bid: threatened

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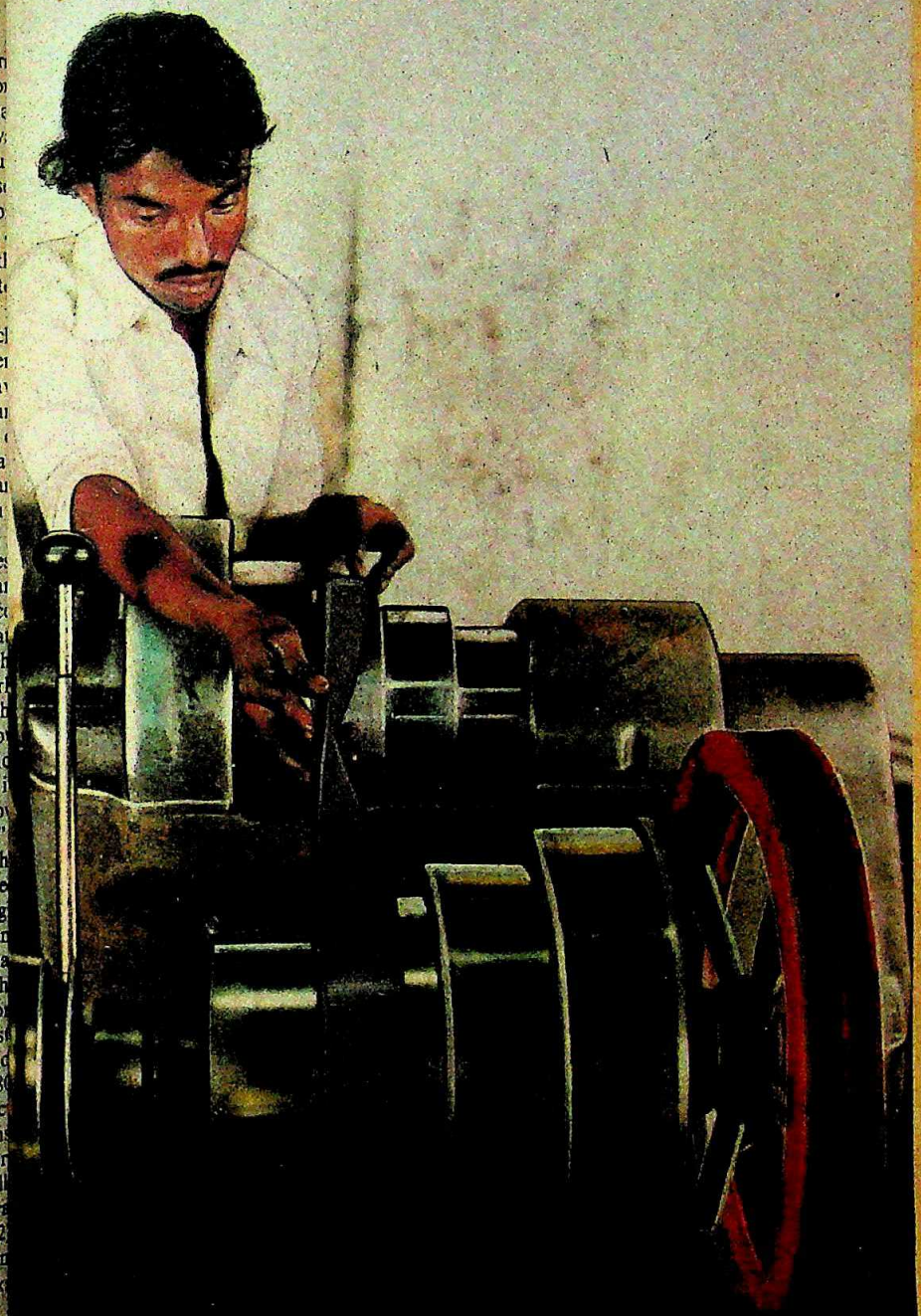

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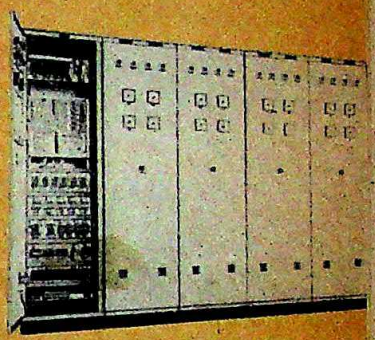

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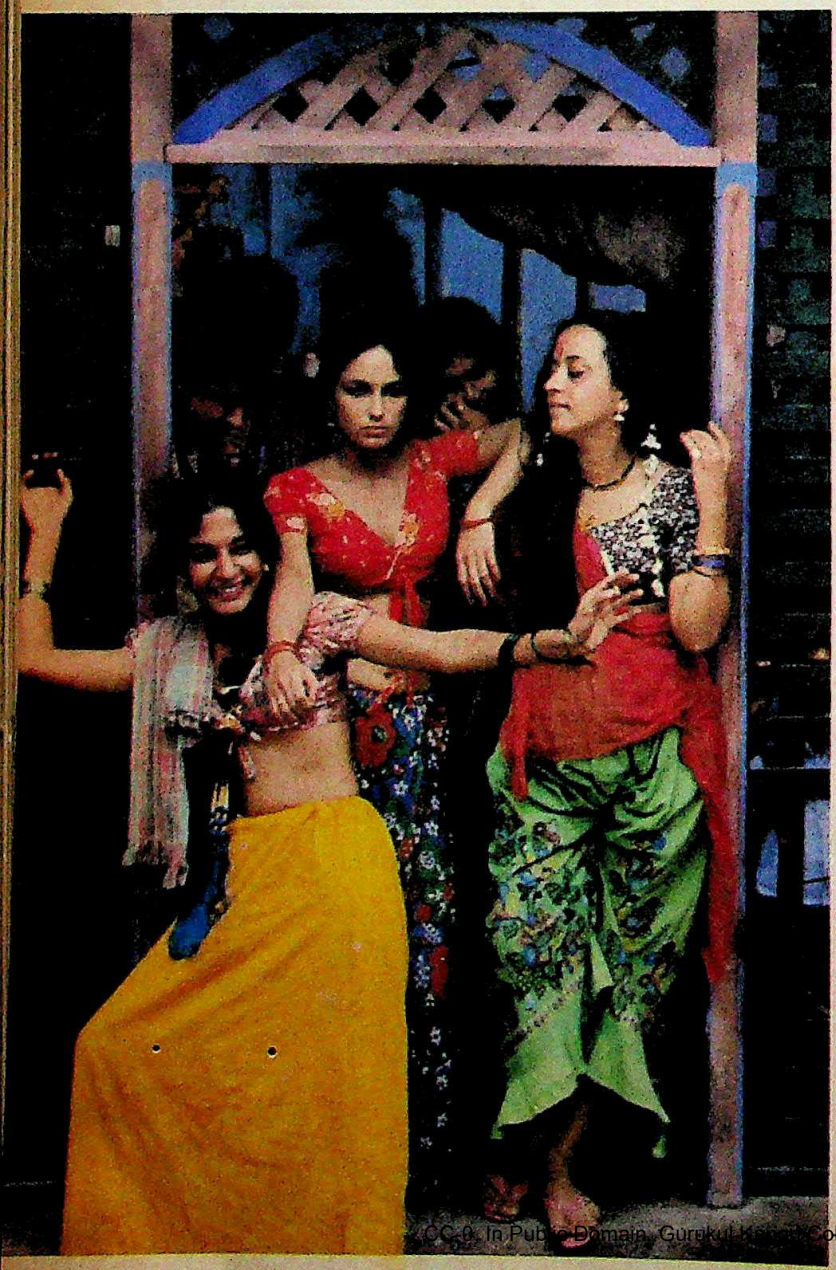
NEW FILMS

THE CREATIVE SURGE

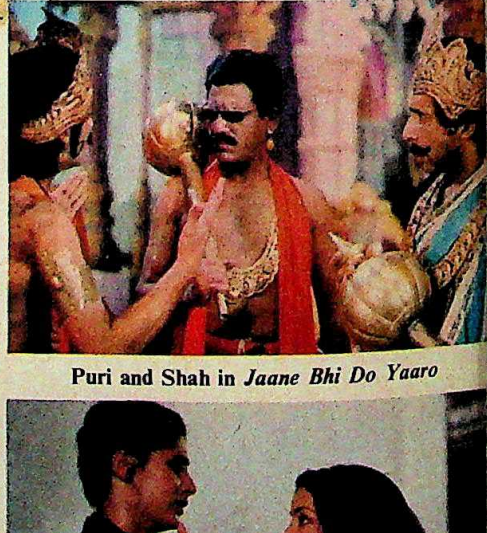
THERE was a time not so long ago that, if you hit the film factories of Bombay city, the pile upon pile of celluloid cans up for release doubtlessly looked the same, inside and outside. Faceless and frequently soulless, the products seemed interchangeable as they came off the assembly line of the commercial industry. Not any more. The high-voltage vagaries of the commercial system may still exist, but if you look inside the cans today, chances are that you will spot more grain in the chaff, some interesting new truths in the ceaseless flow of trash.

The reality of going to the movies has changed. While the hard core industry still reels from one capricious crisis to another (shortage of funds, distribution blockades, fallen studios and falling stars, and a general uncertainty over the box-office future of the ubiquitous formula), there are more and more films that look different. They are made with a difference. They are talkin about different things; and they are perfo med and put together differently.

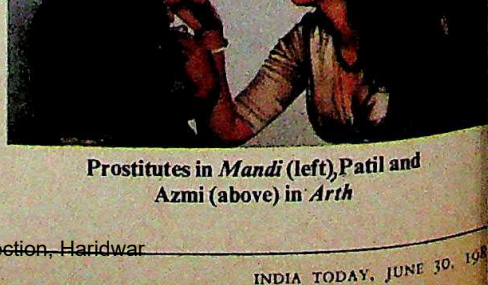
There are some pleasant surprises in t offing in the season to come. The range movies to be released between now ar September demonstrates the qualitati change in cinematic values and audien tastes. Tangibly, it is the people behind the films who represent a success that has co out of a tremendous surge of confidence.



Kapoor and Prabhakar in *Kahan Kahan Se Guzar Gaya*



Puri and Shah in *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro*



Prostitutes in *Mandi* (left), Patil and Azmi (above) in *Arth*

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-ether it is an established film maker yam Benegal experimenting with omedy in his latest film *Mandi* or a raduate of the Film and Television of India, Kundan Shah, trying his slapstick in his maiden effort *Jaane Yaaro* (*see reviews*), the new lot of are energetic, original, well-crafted nply more relevant in their social Breakthrough in comedy aside, this so turn out to be the year of an political film—Govind Nihalani's *tya* is made of pure steel. It's the toughest and altogether electrifying of the Indian police and will no ring the lights down in a blaze of ersy.

Courageous Task: Yet Nihalani, the balding, round-faced cameraman whose third directorial feature this is, has managed to find finance to direct a film that few would have had the courage to back. Says he: "Though it's still an uphill task to find backers, 10 years ago it wouldn't have been possible at all." *Ardh Satya,* which cost about Rs 15 lakh, has been financed by a consortium of four producers, two of them processing laboratory owners, one a garment trader and the fourth an industrialist who came together to pool in resources.

Mahesh Bhatt, the 34-year-old director of *Arth*, found a producer out of sheer accident. "Some businessman came to my father who is a veteran director of stunt and mythological movies and asked him to make a film for him. I said to the producer, why don't you give me the money instead and I'll make you a different kind of film.' He said, 'Can you direct a film?' I said, 'If I can't then no one else can.' So next day he simply came and handed me the money."

Bhatt's key phrase is "a different kind of film". For a director whose earlier features had been pure commercial pot-boilers (films like *Manzilen Aur Bhi Hain, Vishwaasghaat, Naya Daur* and *Lahu Ke Do Rang*) Bhatt was sure he wanted to do something different, something closer to his own reality. Drawing from his own life, he wrote, together with a friend, the script of *Arth*. And his

HYAM Benegal's eleventh feature is also his first attempt at social medy—it's a whacky-tipsy account of goings-on inside a Hyderabad whore-use. Produced by Blaze Enterprises, negal's oldest backers, *Mandi* is shot in iciously lurid detail, with an enormous of characters that keep the action ver bubbling over. It's the first time an ian movie cuts out the sticky-cheap el about courtesans and *kothas* and ws it as it really is: garish and seedy, kless and heartless, make-believe and d-to-believe.

Shabana Azmi—looking aptly over-ght and overdressed in tinsel saris and avy perm—is the incorrigible Ruk-i Bai, a brothel-keeper whose disor-ly house is perpetually on the point of apse. Something is always going ng, and it's not just lack of customers. either the policemen crashing in upon floozies, or the neighbourhood photo-pher cashing in by taking dirty ures.

Hilarious Parody: One morning a p brings in a girl he's "married" and s her, but she turns out to be mute and rmined not to oblige clients. Instead, threatens to jump off a balcony and hell breaks loose. Another morning a nkey slips into the house and un-shes a wave of terror and hilarious os. Then the do-gooding ladies from local Nari Niketan arrive and demand house of vice be closed down and the ores moved out. The landlord follows with an offer of an alternative pro-ty far outside the city. Rukmini Bai ng a tart with a heart, and also a ewd operator, relents and carries her go of tetchy, half-hysterical hussies to new site that bears few signs of ilisation. And certainly no signs of tomers.

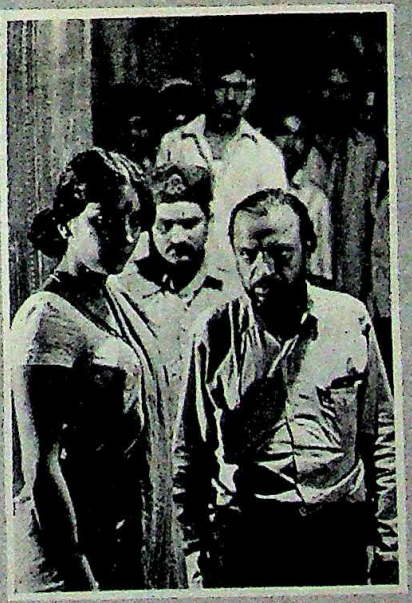
Here, Benegal's rip-roaring parody becomes a parable: by a miracle boon granted by a fakir Rukmini Bai begins to flourish in the wilderness. Civilisation erupts around the whore-house: the dim-wit, drunken servant returns from the old *kotha*, the policeman comes too, and the once troublesome landlord begins to speculate in real estate as land prices boom. The jungle becomes a carnival, custmers flock in day and night. The good times are back.

Alas, not for long. Life is again becoming a grind for Rukmini Bai. A secret concerning her adopted daughter Zeenat—adroitly played by Smita Patil as an over-protected innocent in a den of vice—takes its toll. Old Rukmini Bai is being pushed out by her rebellious girls.

Significant Statement: Where will she go? Stripped of her establishment, deserted by her girls and daughter, and armed only with her tin cash-box and dim-wit servant, is she now finally on the skids? With one brilliant, deft stroke Benegal provides the answer in the final shot, making Rukmini Bai the world's longest lasting madam. It's an ending that raises the level of the film from a comic melodrama to a metaphysical statement, because Benegal's whore is no cardboard cut-out. She seems to suggest the endless indomitability of the human spirit. She's down but not out, and as the ultimate passenger through life she's also its most resourceful entrepreneur.

At whatever level you look at it *Mandi* is terrific fun: it's robust energy, raw appeal and whimsical comedy work, though the story-telling begins to pall in the second half. The sets, costumes and songs are as near as anything you'll find down sleaze-street. The vast congregation of performers include Naseeruddin Shah as the servant, Om Puri as the photographer, Saeed Jaffrey as Rukmini Bai's old landlord and confidant, Kulbhushan Kharbanda as her new landlord, and Soni Razdan, Neena Gupta, Anita Kanwar among others as the girls who keep the brothel bursting.

MANDI
Produced by Blaze Enterprises
Directed by Shyam Benegal
Starring: Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil, Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Saeed Jaffrey, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Soni Razdan, Neena Gupta, Anita Kanwar.



Benegal at work with Azmi

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producer, Kuljit Pal, backed him right through with no interference in the project. The film was completed last August, and the reaction at the previews was so good, that distributors were queuing up at the door. Says Bhatt: "My producer's phone was ringing every half hour. He is so pleased that he says that I have got him addicted to these kind of films." Made at a cost of about Rs 22 lakh, *Arth* is selling for Rs 6 lakh to Rs 7 lakh a territory and is bound to have successful runs in metro cities and large towns. A deeply conservative distribution company, Rajshri Productions who themselves produce strictly "vegetarian" domestic melodramas, have purchased it for two territories. And Bhatt himself admits that he's a changed man: "After *Arth* I'm simply not going to lend my skill to a project that goes against my grain. It's bad business and it's bad for your conscience."

Bhatt is a prime example of a director from the mainstream industry who has consciously moved over to another kind of film making. With good reason. *Arth*," he says, "is my most commercial film so far simply because of the response I have got even before its release."

Clear Concept: Kundan Shah, the 35-year-old Film Institute graduate who has directed his first film, *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro*, came to film making via publishing. After graduation from the Pune Film Institute —where he was a contemporary of Saeed Mirza and Robin Dharamraj—he worked as an assistant director to Mirza, made one documentary on the blind for the Films Division and short three-minute motivation documentaries for the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. But he had, he says, a clear idea that his first feature would be an attempt at slapstick. His diploma film had been a silent comedy, and he has always owed a debt to the great masters of comic drama: Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Laurel and Hardy. He got the idea for his movie from a friend who ran a photographer's studio; this, coupled with his fascination for the newspaper world, resulted in the script which was submitted to the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) which loved it. Shah's other debt is to the NFDC that sponsored the film completely, with a budget of Rs 7.5 lakh.

It is Shah's ingenious camera work and aptness in choosing locations that makes the film look more expensive; in fact, it was made on such a tight a budget that many of the unit members remember it as very hi

Patil and Kharbanda in a stormy scene from *Arth*

ADULTERY is obviously in. Yash Chopra's *Silsila* let open the floodgates two years ago. But his view of extramarital relationships was so dense that no one found it picaresque or profound, and no amount of intensity by Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Bhaduri and Rekha who were supposedly enacting their real-life situation could cut much ice with the audience. Earlier this year, Shekhar Kapoor's *Masoom* had a huge success, and reasonably so, being a cleverly-directed and superbly-performed movie about the shattering consequence of a brief adulterous liaison.

Mahesh Bhatt's *Arth* is a different kettle of fish altogether. It's a sort of Juhu Beach view of adultery and, the director says, partly autobiographical in its material. It places the triangular relationship very much in the Adults Only zone, which is to say that it indulges in none of the juvenile high jinks of *Silsila* and makes *Masoom* look positively like kid stuff. It's about what happens to a young wife (Shabana Azmi) when her husband (Kulbhushan Kharbanda) walks out on her to shack up with another woman (Smita Patil) who is both rich and famous.

First, there are the lies. The husband doesn't show up home at nights, keeps shooting off to Goa on assignments, and is desperately compensating for his misdeeds at home to keep the wife happy. Well done. Then there is the rising possessiveness of the mistress who wants to marry him and his rising guilt about the wife who still doesn't know. Once the truth spills out, the deserted wife's trauma leaps off the screen with a searing intensity. Well done again.

ARTH
Directed by Mahesh Bhatt
Starring: Shabana Azmi, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Smita Patil, Rohini Hattangady, Raj Kiran

Mahesh Bhatt: high-voltage intensity

Unusual Relationship: So far the film has a taut energy and dramatic centre that is gripping. But once the young wife starts life on her own in a working girl's hostel and the husband's film star mistress finds her guilt rapidly descending into neurosis, something goes wrong. The film's credibility begins to falter when the lonesome wife, in her attempts to find a job, starts a relationship with a young singer (Raj Kiran) who is on his way to becoming a major pop star. The young man becomes besotted with the divorcee on the one hand, on the other hand the husband's relationship with the film star slowly begins to founder. And the film itself, staring out with a strong situation, begins to meander as the characters move from one crisis of identity to another.

Perhaps what finally affects the film's credibility is its eventual compromise: where else in the world would a young business executive walk out on his loving wife to fall into the arms of a ritzy film star? And where else in the world would the desolate wife find an adolescent pop star to woo her? Only on Juhu Beach. Still, *Arth* has strong passages of truth; it's a breakthrough at looking at human relationships in a wholly adult fashion. And for Shabana Azmi's performance alone (she has just collected the National Award for Best Actress for the role) the film is worth a look. It salvages whatever there is to save in the movie.

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"We had to cut costs on the of cups of tea," says one who isn't at for the experience. Nor is the NFDC ing up the money. They know they winner on their hands. Says Ravi manager, film finance at the NFDC: extremely pleased about the reaction *Bhi Do Yaaro*. There is no way we money on such a film." And the director is quite clear why he "Making a comedy is the ea- to have the audience on your also the acid test of film ma- says Shah.

may take Shah some time he can start his next feature another script in hand appro- the NFDC—but a director like i is already embarking upon production after *Ardh Satya*. ihalani: "It still gets to be a usiness finding producers—I ne goes on hoping that someo- ask you to make a film." The e, in Nihalani's case, it was r Shashi Kapoor. The result ovie called *Vijeta* that bombed at the box-office, being an ill-conceived and ill-starred vehicle that suffered from all kinds of inconsistencies. Nihalani's next film, *Party*, based on a play by Mahesh Elkunchwar, is to be financed entirely by the NFDC.

The NFDC's role as film producer is expanding and becoming more prolific. It has seven productions on the floor, of which three are complete, and cost anywhere between Rs 6 lakh and Rs 15 lakh. Satyajit Ray's long-awaited *Ghare Baire* is an NFDC production. In fact, the NFDC's efforts to turn producer—based on its two script competitions which have enabled it to select the best for production—is more successful than its attempt at granting loans. Since 1962, only 42 of the 109 films made on NFDC loans have recovered their costs and the corporation has had to write off the rest.

Shah and Baswani in *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro*

STILL, film makers like M.S. Sathyu think that NFDC's loans operate on a kind of feudal contract. "They've been issuing the same kind of loan contracts for the past 20 years. Instead of demanding collateral security and charging interest from the start of the picture's production, they should offer interest-free loans for a share in the profits." Both his Hindi film *Garam Hawa* and his Kannada film *Bara* which were financed by the NFDC had trouble, especially the latter. "By the time the film is completed and sold it has taken three years of accrued interest to pay back, so that a low cost

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KUNDAN Shah is a quiet 35-year-old graduate from the Film stitute in Pune and this, his first ature produced by the National m Development Corporation (NFDC) a shoestring budget, is the zaniest ng you ever saw. It's pure slapstick, rformed with the kind of aplomb that is tually extinct in Hindi movies. Not ce *Chalti Ka Naam Gadi* has there been ything so slickly paced and funny, ough *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* isn't a rom- tic comedy with great songs. It's a mic thriller centred around the world journalism and its heroes are a pair of otographers caught in a web of high trigue and corruption.

Naseeruddin Shah and Ravi Bas- ani play the out-of-work proprietors of eauty Photo Studio who con the lady itor of a local tabloid called *Khabardar* to giving them an assignment. The itor (nicely played as a hard-boiled oman of the world by Marathi actress hakti Bharve) has other ideas: she cons em into collecting photographic evid- ce of industrial contractors bribing the y commissioner.

It develops into a mad chase with the otographers pulling the wool over the mmissioner's eyes, the rival contractors oing hammer and tongs at the corrupt mmissioner and then at each other. ne uproarious episode follows another er the tenders for the flyover that the mpeting builders are bidding for. As the situation get progressively outrageous, the director seems to gain control instead of losing it: the lines get funnier, the action speedier and the performances more finely tuned.

Subtle Comedy: There are jokes for everyone: amid the hurly-burly of the slapstick there are some clever witticisms for those who can catch them. The public park, for instance, where the daring duo find the commissioner's corpse is called Antonioni Park, an allusion to the Italian film maker's climactic sequence in a famous film. And the hilarious anonymous caller who plagues the contractor's secretary is called Albert Pinto, an obvious joke on film maker Saeed Mirza who made a movie called *Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Aata Hai*.

JAANE BHI DO YAARO
Produced by the National Film Development Corporation
Directed by Kundan Shah
Starring: Naseeruddin Shah, Ravi Baswani, Bhakti Barve, Om Puri, Pankaj Kapoor, Neena Gupta

Kundan Shah: slick comedy

The success of the comedy also lies in the underlying social message. Everyone recognises the corrupt commissioner, the wheeling-dealing contractors and the editor who, in the end, sells out too. But those who have lived in Bombay recently amid the cacophony of corrupt builders will also see the grim joke of the flyover that collapses—the incident is obviously lifted from the real-life collapse of the Byculla flyover a few years ago. But Shah, cleverly, doesn't dish out the message. It's there for those who care to register the facts, the rest can sit back and enjoy the frenzied pace of the fun which is unrelenting. Probably too unrelenting in the end as the chase of the corpse—now on wheels, now in drag—is stretched out too far.

Shah says he plans to cut portions of the film to make it tighter, and he needs to. As it stands, it's exhaustingly funny, but still an achievement.

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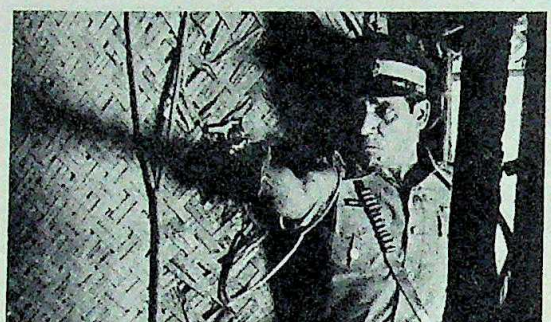
film ends up becoming a high cost one." His latest film, *Kahan Kahan Se Guzar Gaya* which will end up costing Rs 12 lakh, however, is produced from a combination of finance: a Rs 3 lakh *carte* grant from the West Bengal Government, another Rs 2 lakh loan from the Allahabad Bank, some private and some distributor's money. And Sathyu doesn't subscribe to the general wave of optimism around him. "Attitudes," he says, "to my kind of film still haven't changed. There aren't more buyers than before. There are signs of film makers chipping in but this is marginal, there isn't a major shift in trend."

Opinion is also divided on the artistic worth of new directors like Sai Paranjpye and Shekhar Kapoor and their contribution in making "different" films. Paranjpye's *Chashme Buddoor* and Kapoor's *Masoom*, both box-office smashes beside being highly intelligent entertainers, have polarised points of view. Says Sathyu: "You can't say Paranjpye and Kapoor are making different kinds of films. You can't say their films are like *Aakrosh*. "Perhaps it is the fact that Paranjpye is now directing a film for film-star-turned-producer Dharmendra called Bichoo and Kapoor is attempting to complete a script for Ramesh Sippy that aggravates fears of their selling out.

Little Relevance: Such questions have less relevance when the quantum of unusual films is considered in the context of the entire industry's output. In a recent interview in book called *Indian Cinema Superbazaar*, director Shyam Benegal puts it clear "When you are offering the audience a ch ce, the choice is not between 30 films of kind and one of another kind. You have have some sense of parity. I would say if are producing 10 films of one kind and 3 another kind running in a town, at least are offering a choice. But we are producing new films in that quantit



Puri as the beleaguered policeman in *Ardh Satya*

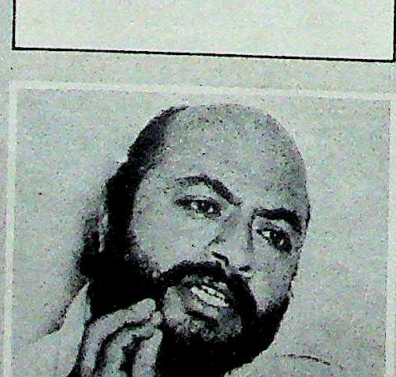
Benegal, in fact, himself rema an exception. He is the only seri film maker in Bombay whose car graph has remained uninterrup over nearly 10 years, having direc at least one feature a year. Like m others who have followed in footsteps, Benegal's finance has co from a variety of sources: from st governments, from producers Shashi Kapoor, from advertising co panies like Blaze, producers of his f film *Ankur* and his latest *Mandi*, a from milk producers' cooperative. I it has never let his output suffer forced him into artistic compromi

FOR THOSE who remember a celebrated first film called *Aakrosh* made by cameraman Govind Nihalani three years ago, this is a film that promises a very bright future. For those who were struck by the powerful truths of violence and corruption of *Aakrosh* (being the kind of movie it was, it was astonishingly a commercial success), Nihalani's new film will appear in logical progression to his earlier work. It is possibly the most provocative political film of the year, treating a subject that has generally been shunned by Indian film makers and never considered sympathetically or sharply enough even by journalists.

Ardh Satya, which means half-truth, is about the Indian police. Or rather, it is the story of one policeman, a junior sub-inspector in a Bombay police station. Specifically, it is the closest scrutiny so far of the relationship between the police and the underworld, or how corruption infiltrates any local thana to become a power so pervasive that it corrodes the law-and-order machinery and brutalises the spirit of the policeman totally. Brutalises it, in fact, to drive the young recruit first to drink and then finally to commit an atrocity in the lock-up.

Powerful Metaphor: It's a frightening film to watch because it gets to the core of violence in so precisely accurate a manner; because it looks at the institution of the police not in cold, clinical terms but through the personal history of one man. One man, who is driven by his private predilections as much by his sense of professional duty, to take revenge. Or to completely break down as a human being. The policeman's break down becomes a metaphor for the break down of the institution and the two movements are so deftly interwoven, that the shock of the whole is staggering. Based on a Marathi short story by S.D. Panvalkar and given an extensive screenplay treatment by playwright Vijay Tendulkar, *Ardh Satya* is a film that will—and should—cause much public commotion. Its maker fears censor trouble, and if there is any, it should be fought to get the film the widest showing possible.

ARDH SATYA
Directed by Govind Nihalani
Starring: Om Puri, Smita Patil



Nihalani: strong political statement

Om Puri, in one of the finest performances of his career, plays the young policman whose relationships with his autocratic father—a small-time provincial policemen with high hopes for his son—and with his girl-friend (Smita Patil) who is a college lecturer, add to the cause and effect of his frustration as do the goings-on inside the police station.

Some passages in the film, especially the second half, get a little baggy and the director tends to overstate his "message", especially in a dreary lecture on the morality of the civil servant. The questioning, almost moralising tone of the policeman's girl-friend—meant to provide some solid introspection—may appear to some as a little cloying. But these are small defects compared to the overriding importance of the film. For any Indian with a social conscience, *Ardh Satya* is compulsive viewing. It's the most important film of the year.

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negal's newest film also establishes ertoire as a director of comedy. Says I were to be flip I would say that one tired of making films on grim *Mandi* is made in a lighter vein with underlying seriousness. Originally, I tended it as black comedy but I I'm not really cynical enough to do Even so, many would think it his most ining movie, with its superb g of comic situations and ous cast of roguishly lovable rs. It cost Blaze about Rs 36 produce over a single non-ooting spell. They will distribute selves and are determined to or at least Rs 8 lakh a territory.

Good Support: One reason why rketability of such movies has is because of the willingness of own performers to support the Actresses like Shabana Azmi ita Patil and actors like Nasee-Shah and Om Puri regard such as their first priority. Says "I think my contribution is alid because of the double life I lead by taking on both kinds of films. If I have some sort of fan following because of my exposure in commercial films, then I presume that his following would like to see anything with Shabana Azmi in it. Otherwise, for a film like *Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Aata Hai* a hundred people wouldn't even enter a cinema hall. But now they'll think, Naseeruddin Shah is in it and we know something of him, Shabana Azmi is there and we know something about her, let's see what they're at. It would at least arouse their curiosity.".

Performers like her don't think they're doing it alone. Says actor Om Puri who is both in Benegal's *Mandi* and plays the tormented police hero in Nihalani's *Ardh Satya*: "Sooner or later more and more movies will require skill more than personalities. They'll have to use real actors as standards become increasingly comparable."

Skill is the crux of the matter. It is what characterises the new films as separate from the chaff of the industry. They're skilfully thought out, skilfully made and performed, and concern a new reality in perceiving everything, from jokes to real life tragedy. Whether it is satire or domestic melodrama, way out slapstick or political comment, the new skill in the movies shows. It is what makes the season to come one of the most fulfilling at the cinema.

—SUNIL SETHI

Prabhakar as the crooner in *Kahan Kahan Se Guzar Gaya*

FILM MAKER and theatre director M.S. Sathyu's best-known contribution to cinema is a film called *Garam Hawa* (1974), a remarkable study of a Muslim family in Agra coming to terms with the Great Divide of Partition. Nearly 10 years later he's putting the finishing touches to his second film in Hindi based on a screenplay by his wife Shama Zaidi. *Kahan Kahan Se Guzar Gaya*, started on a Rs 3-lakh no-strings attached grant by the West Bengal Government, has ended up costing nearly four times that amount. It's a memorable, retrospective, evenly-paced movie about an upper class youth's coming of age in contemporary Calcutta.

The adolescent hero (played with a combination of instinct and flair by an actor called Anil Kapoor who promises to be Bombay's brightest discovery in the 80s) is the scion of a Punjabi industrial family of Calcutta: spoilt, wilful and rebellious against the corruptions of his class.

Switching Sides: It is a breakdown between father and son that leads the son to leave home: first to shack up with a ready young restaurant crooner (played with vibrant ease by singer Sharon Prabhakar), then to perform bit assignments as an advertising model (there is an effective cameo by Calcutta actor Shamanand Jalan playing a faggot photographer) and finally, as his disgust of the milieu grows and begins to manifest itself in his relationship with the singer, he switches sides completely.

He joins the singer's Naxalite brother. The scene changes brilliantly from the restaurants and clubs of upper class Calcutta gentry to the city's coffee houses, grimy buses and dirty back streets. Here in the ghettos of oppression there is talk of revolution and class struggle, and the impetus for excitement is provided by poster-sticking campaigns and criminal conspiracy. The boy returns home, to shed his blue jeans for a khadi kurta; the latest pop albums give way to readings from Marx and Lenin. Trite stuff?

Not really. As Sathyu handles it, with a mixture of reflective assurance and underplayed suggestion, the young hero's predilections become very real and tangible. His urge to identify with a person or a cause, his keenness to resolve his private crisis lead him to participate in a kidnapping planned by the radicals. The irony, of course, is that the minister to be kidnapped is a close friend of the boy's father—the same man who had arrived to inaugurate the father's factory and proceeded to drink beer out of a teapot.

The ending is neither cynical nor flip; it is the logical conclusion to the boy's progress. It's the kind of story that occurs commonly enough, but no one has made a film of it. Sathyu's *Kahan Kahan Se Guzar Gaya* may have some weak moments (such as the hash-smoking revelries being conducted in the crooner's flat or the decidedly peculiar Punjabi accents of the boy's parents) but in its quiet, leisurely-structured fashion it is an articulate and moving film about the problems of growing up.

KAHAN KAHAN SE GUZAR GAYA
Directed by M.S. Sathyu
Starring: Anil Kapoor, Sharon Prabhakar, Shamanand Jalan, Pankaj Kapoor

Sathyu: home truths about growing up

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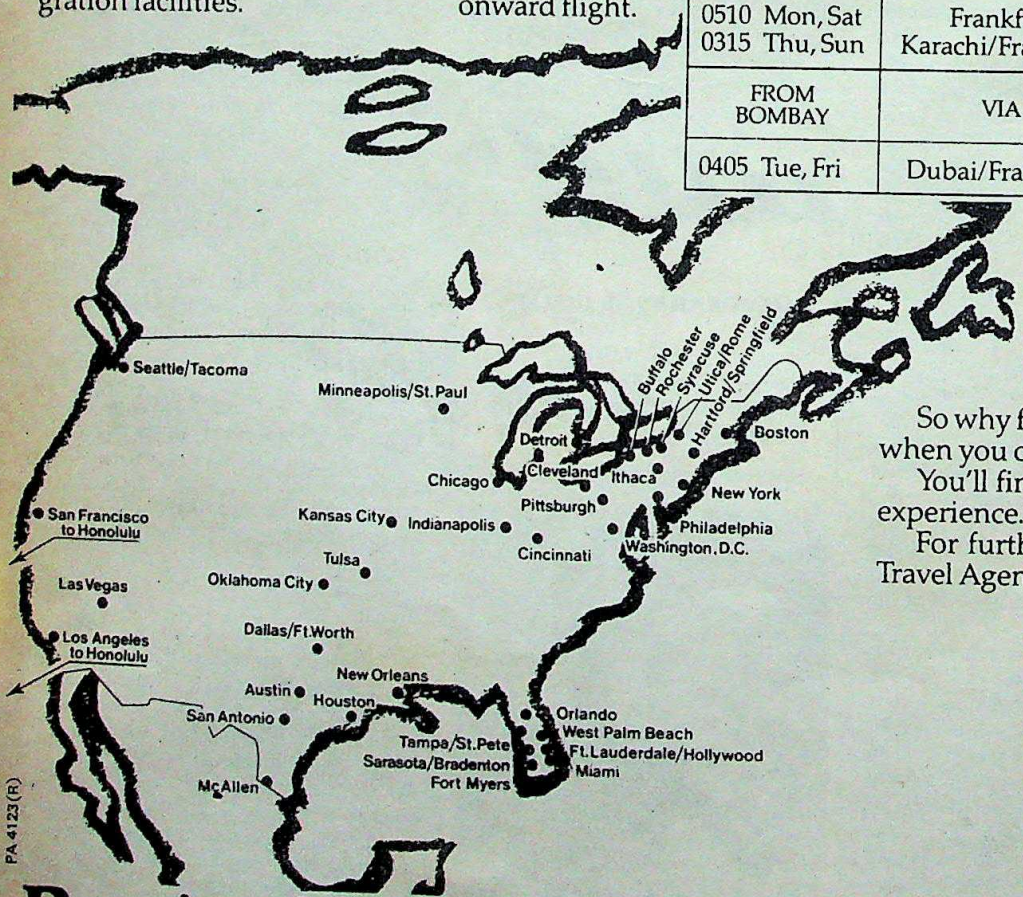

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D FORCES

eneral Trends

HE DEFENCES have, quite literally, inally been breached. In a terse, one-ine statement last fortnight, the Go-nt announced that Lt-General A.S. had been appointed to take over as army staff from General K.V. Krish-, who retires in August. But that one ke volumes. Vaidya's appointment is st controversial in the history of the forces. Not because of his qualifi-, which are unquestionable, but of the dangerous political overto-obviously carries. By appointing 57, to the country's top military Government rudely superseded hief of Army Staff Lt-General aha, 57, the senior of the two and who had been brought in as vice rely five months ago to take over

at Sinha was to be the next chief dely accepted. In fact, INDIA TODAY first to announce his impending tment as vice chief (INDIA TODAY, 1982) as a prelude to his eventual er from Krishna Rao. By disregar-s candidacy in favour of Vaidya, the ment has set an ominous precedent. dition, the overriding criterion for the chief has been seniority, and for a od reason. The chief can only be se-rom among five senior officers—the ef and the heads of the four com-It was precisely to avoid politics, lob-nd unseemly jockeying for the post, e seniority system was adopted and rked so well—till now.

niority Overruled: Significantly, the her time that a more senior officer has perseded was just before the Emer-when Mrs Gandhi's Government oked Lt-General Rawlley and appoin-General Raina as the chief. "The se-system is the only system that can says a senior officer in the Defence ry, "otherwise if five officers know e of them can make it—and they are s who advise the prime minister on y matters—it is inevitable that some extra accommodating to the Govern-o improve their chances."

nha's supersession paves the way for at situation to develop. It must be to nal credit that Sinha has accepted the with dignity and grace. The day the tment was announced, he put in his asking for premature retirement. He ssued a short statement refusing to ent on the issue saying all he wanted "fade away happily and cheerfully."

But the Government's move has sent serious shock waves through defence circles. Most serving officers contacted by INDIA TODAY understandably declined to be named but every single one expressed dismay and disgust at what they undoubtedly consider "politicisation" of the armed forces at the highest levels. The Government, fully aware of the reactions, made a clumsy attempt to justify the appointment on the grounds that Vaidya has more combat experience. But that, on closer scrutiny, hardly holds much water. True, Vaidya is a highly decorated soldier but there have been innumerable instances in the past where officers who have excelled on the battlefield have not made it to the top job, while others, with less combat experience than Sinha, have, and done remarkably well. Manekshaw was one prime example. Though one of the ablest chiefs of staff the army has ever had, Manekshaw had hardly any combat experience when he was made chief, while Lt-General Harbaksh Singh, one of his senior colleagues, had vastly more battle experience. Similarly, Krishna Rao himself has very little battle experience while Jagjit Singh Aurora, the "liberator of Bangladesh", was overlooked as chief in favour of Bewoor. Then there is Lt-General Sparrow, now a Lok Sabha MP, who was one of the most highly decorated soldiers in the Indian army, but never made it to chief. The list is endless.

Vaidya (left) and Sinha: dangerous precedent

Possible Explanation: So much for the seniority theory. The other theory, based purely on the career records of the two men, is more convincing. Vaidya, against all accepted military norms, is on record as having made at least two statements which cannot be construed as anything but pro-government, one on Tripura and the other on the law and order situation in the country. On the other hand, Sinha has hardly professed pro-establishment views. He has made no secret of his distaste for the increasing political and bureaucratic interference in army matters and military decisions.

Suspect Reasoning: Such attitudes could hardly have endeared him to the powers that be or the bureaucracy. It is also well known that almost every step taken in recent times to improve service conditions and pay scales in the services have had Sinha's unmistakable stamp on them. If he was made chief, he would definitely have ensured their implementation. In the wake of the controversy, the Defence Ministry is putting out another reason for his supersession—his health, they claim, was not satisfactory. However, they have conveniently neglected to take note of Vaidya's health—he has a heart problem, a fact that is in his records and has been confirmed by the doctor who treats him.

Is there, consequently, a more sinister reason behind the move? Top army officials are convinced there is. The decision to appoint Vaidya is certainly sudden. The orders were given by Mrs Gandhi the day before she left for her election tour of Kashmir. Till then, there had been no question of Sinha not succeeding Krishna Rao. Further, it is obvious that the decision has been taken at the very top, which means three or four people at the most—Mrs Gandhi, the defence minister, the defence secretary, and the cabinet secretary.

Long-term Objective: Most army officers with access to the machinations of the Defence Ministry firmly believe that the hidden hand behind the moves belongs to the so-called "Kashmiri lobby" and that Sinha was superseded not to make way for Vaidya, but to pave the way for the appointment of Lt-General Kaul as chief sometime in the future.

But that theory contains some holes as well. For one, it would have meant the certainty that Sinha would quit on being superceded. Secondly, it would have meant the complicity of General Kaul, which, considering his record, is unthinkable. What is certain is that the Government has done the services irreparable harm by its action. It has not just "opened the floodgates", as one senior army officer put it, but visibly affected the morale of the armed forces top brass. It is positive that if Sinha was a Sikh, the Government would not have dared to supersede him. As it is, in the Chandi by-election in Bihar, opposition posters listed Sinha's supersession (he is the first Bihari general in the Indian army) to make the point that Biharis were being sidelined by the Congress(I) Government. Whatever the Government's reasoning, it is a move that has dangerous portents for the future of the only organisation that truly symbolises Indian democracy.

—DILIP BOBB

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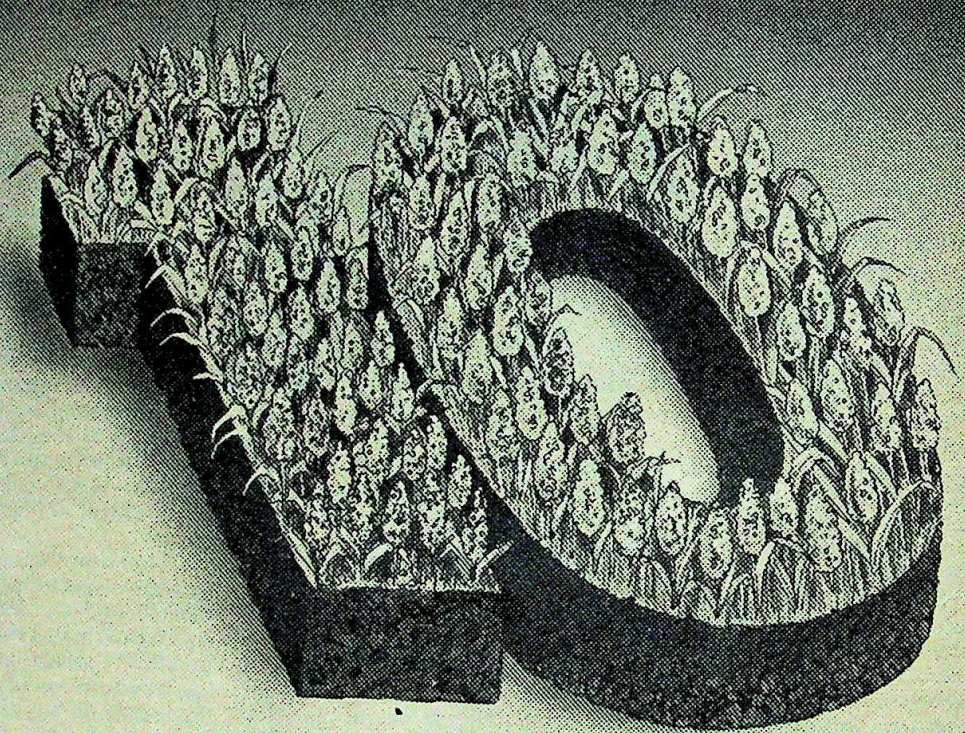
Zuari enters a new decade of growth



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A challenge is not asking whether it is possible or not, whether the mind is capable of freeing itself: the challenge, if it is worth anything at all, is immediate and intense. To respond to it you must have that quality of intensity and immediacy—the feeling of it. When there is this intense approach, then the question has great implications—the challenge is demanding the highest excellence from you, not just intellectually but with every faculty of your being. This challenge is not outside you. Please do not externalise it—which is to make a concept of it. You are demanding of yourself the totality of all your energy.

That very demand wipes away all control, all contradiction and any opposition within yourself. It implies a total integrity, complete harmony. This is the essence of not being selfish."

"...What then is the total responsibility of these schools? Surely they must be centres for learning a way of life which is not based on pleasure, on self-centred activities, but on the understanding of correct action, the depth and beauty of relationship, and the sacredness of a religious life. When the world around us is so utterly destructive and without meaning, these schools, these centres, must become places of light and wisdom. It is the responsibility of those who are in charge of these places to bring this about.

As this is urgent, excuses have no meaning. Either the centres are like a rock round which the waters of destruction flow, or they go with the current of decay. These places exist for the enlightenment of man."

—J. Krishnamurti
From "Letters to the Schools."

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PAKISTAN

Thinking Anew

THERE have been significant changes in Pakistan's strategic perceptions, its regional and world view, since the autumn of 1981 when Islamabad first proposed a no-war pact to India. Eight hours of intensive conversations with senior officials of the Pakistani foreign office, early June, including an 80-minute session with the robust, self-confident Minister for External Affairs, Sahabzada Yakub Khan, have revealed Islamabad's changed, and still changing strategic view of the region and the world. The conversations were off-the-record. However, the essence of Pakistan's new strategic perception was defined by Yakub Khan to be "a quest for security in the South Asian region, taking into account all the realities existing here and also of the changes that are likely to occur in the foreseeable future".

Risking a small degree of simplification, it can be said that Pakistan is now taking a regional view of its external security, with which the stability of the military regime is vitally interlinked. This still-evolving regional view is being sculpted in the policy planning division of the Pakistani External Affairs Ministry, which is headed by a highly competent official, Dr Humayun Khan, one of the four additional secretaries to the ministry. He is assisted by a brilliant young foreign service officer, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi. But the driving force behind the quest for a comprehensive regional strategic perspective is Yakub Khan himself. Unlike his predecessor, Agha Shahi, Sahabzada Yakub Khan is in full command of Pakistan's foreign policy. He was called from Paris to take charge of foreign affairs last year presumably because President Zia-ul-Haq realised that the "global dimensions" of the Afghan crisis were over, and that Pakistan now needed to re-frame its foreign policy to fall in line with regional realities.

Yakub Khan: in full command

Steady Relationship: Yakub Khan brought with him 10 years of experience as his country's ambassador to the US, France and the Soviet Union. He was in Moscow in December 1979 when Soviet forces moved into Afghanistan. He had learnt the Russian language many years before when he was a war prisoner in Russian hands during the Second World War and speaks it fluently, along with two other foreign languages, French and Bengali. Unlike Agha Shahi who used to be sort of Soviet-blind, Yakub Khan understands the Soviet mind and Soviet international behaviour. In less than two years as foreign minister, he has established a relationship of trust and understanding with the Soviets. The robust dialogue that has been going on between Islamabad and Moscow for 18 months has already brought the Afghan tangle tantalisingly within the range of a comprehensive political settlement.

Yakub Khan appears to have approached the Afghan tangle with the field experience of a corps commander. He has taken a sternly accurate view of the forces arrayed in the battlefield. The opportunities that Pakistan can exploit to its advantage, the factors that favour its opponents. He has studied the anatomy of Pakistan's allies and friends and measured the depth and expanse of their commitments to Pakistan and their stakes in the South Asian region. He has also taken a cool-headed realistic measure of the acto arrayed against Pakistan. Above all, he has engaged in a compr hensive reappraisal of Pakistan's fundamental national interests. all this he is being ably assisted by Humayun Khan and Ashr Jehangir.

Yakub Khan's strategic reappraisal has rejected the "glob view" of the Afghan tangle that instantly flourished in Islamab in the immediate wake of the Soviet military intervention Afghanistan. No one in the Pakistan foreign office now talks abo Afghanistan as a "global crisis" involving the two superpowers. Yakub Khan's vision, Pakistan is not an ally of the United Stat soldiering on behalf of the free world to contain Soviet expansioni power. Nor is Pakistan a buffer state between Soviet power a India, helplessly dependent on American guns and dollars.

In the new strategic perspective, Pakistan is a "small sovere nation" situated in South Asia. Its security, indeed its survi depends on its ability to live in peace and go neighbourly harmony with all its neighbou Among its neighbours are two "large powers one of whom is a superpower. These two powe are closely tied up with one another. Pakist just cannot afford to live in hostility w these two powers—the Soviet Union and Ind Pakistan is a long-standing friend of the US. B deep contradictions tear at the relationship. T US is far away. Its commitments to Pakist are limited. So is its involvement in Sou Asia. Furthermore, American commitments Pakistan and involvement in South Asia tend fluctuate from time to time, depending on th man who resides in the White House. The Sov intervention in Afghanistan created a "conv gence of perceptions" of Pakistan and the U but there has never been, nor can there be, Pakistan-American "convergence of strate interests and actions". As one Pakistani p it: "The paradox of the US-Pakistan relationsh is that while the US is the great friend of Pakist it is also immensely unpopular amongst the people of Pakistan.

Building Cooperation: In Pakistan's new strategic thinkin there is no "India card" to be played against the USSR nor a "Sov card" to be played against India. Pakistani strategists realise th Pakistan must improve its relations simultaneously with India a the Soviet Union. They see the two processes to be feeding o another. Pakistan is not aiming at the friendship of India and USSR, at least not yet. The aim is to remove tension, to normali and to hasten slowly towards cooperation. The conservative, Islam regime in Islamabad does not wish to throw itself into the arms the Russian bear. What it does want is to remove the hostile clima that vitiates Pakistan's relations with the USSR. With India, it somewhat different. The military regime seems to be genuine interested in building a mosaic of many-sided cooperation wi India. But it prefers to tread the ground with caution. Not mere because there is a hard core in Pakistan that rejects cooperati with India until the Kashmir issue has been resolved, but al because the military regime itself is not convinced that Pri Minister Indira Gandhi genuinely desires to make friends w Pakistan.

Pakistan's quest for a comprehensive political settlement of t

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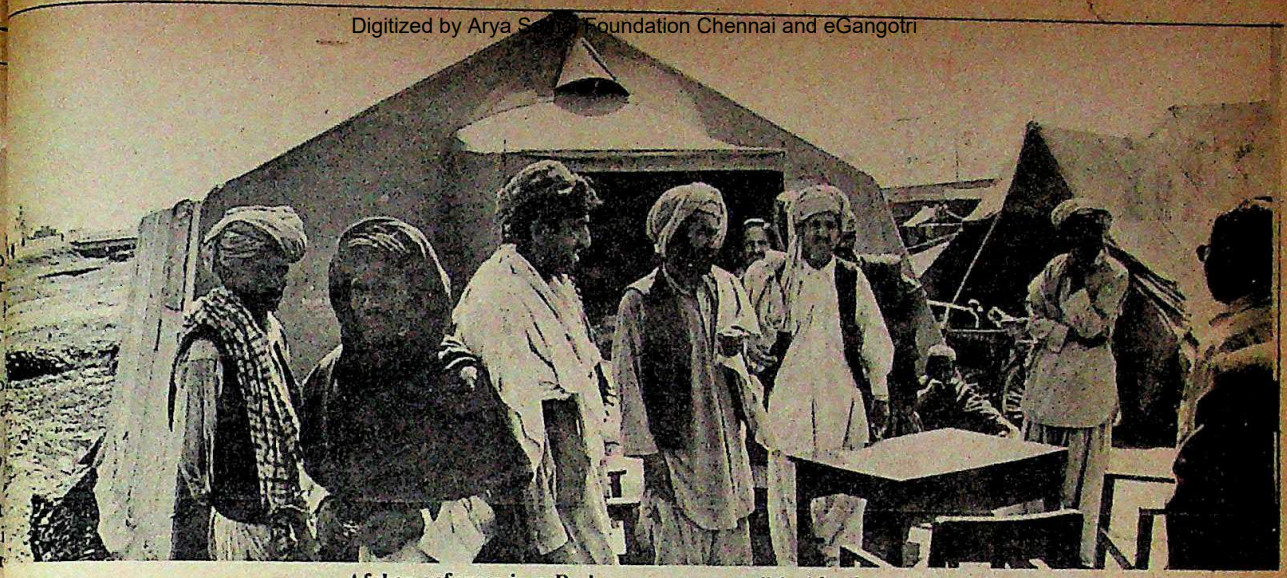

Afghan refugees in a Peshawar camp: a political burden

an tangle springs from its newly minted strategic perspective. tan now sees the Soviet Union as a South Asian power, with anent political and security stakes in this region. The Soviets ot be dislodged from Afghanistan by military counterforce. continued presence in Afghanistan has been politically and cially expensive. There are very good reasons why the Soviets ld welcome an opportunity to withdraw their troops from anistan. Yakub Khan and his colleagues have drawn up a fairly ate list of what the Soviets have lost and are still likely to lose aying on militarily in Afghanistan. Pakistan, however, harbours lusion that the Soviets would pull out under the duress of al and economic burdens. Yakub Khan knows the great rtance the Russians attach to forms and symbols. He is oughly acquainted with the "siege mentality" of the Soviet State, of the Russian people from the time of Peter the Great. ably he harbours some sympathy for Moscow's fear psychosis, ed by 60 years of hostility from the capitalist powers. The very hat Pakistan's foreign minister has been trying to understand the Soviets intervened in Afghanistan, whether it was a defensive offensive more, or both, is a major departure from the ional anti-Soviet thrusts of Pakistan's foreign policy.

The two-year-old "indirect" negotiations on Afghanistan, ed out through the agency of the special United Nations ator, Deigo Cardovez, have now arrived at the most crucial The third round of talks that begin in Geneva on June 16 robably decide whether a final agreement is within sight or is ar off. Yakub Khan in his public statements has chosen to be iously optimistic"; while he has several times spoken of "good ress" having been made in the talks, he has also cautioned st "expecting too much too soon". However, he has invested of time and energy to work out an agreement, and he has ed the consent of China, the US and Saudi Arabia to join other ries (including India) to provide international guarantees of ntervention in the affairs of Afghanistan. Indeed, one of Yakub 's major diplomatic achievements is the assurance he has ed personally from the US Secretary of State, George Shultz, he US would go along with an accord on Afghanistan able to Islamabad.

A 20-page draft agreement written by Cardovez on the basis of lks held so far centres round a four-point "core": withdrawal of troops; cessation of all interference in Afghan affairs; national guarantee of non-intervention; and return of the ees. The divisive issue of which one of these four is to come first lso been resolved by an accord that all the four "core" elements must be put to action simultaneously. Pakistan has for all practical purposes reconciled itself to a Marxist or Marxism-oriented pro-Soviet regime ruling in Afghanistan.

Refugee Problem: Pakistan's main problem is how to send the three million Afghan refugees back home. The refugees have begun to tell on Pakistan's fragile political system; the regime just cannot afford to have this huge mass of foreigners on a most sensitive part of its territory for an indefinite period. Pakistan therefore cannot accept an agreement which will not enable it to send the refugees back home. The refugees would not return until the "face" of the Kabul regime has changed. If Pakistan helps the Soviet Union to get its troops out of Afghanistan, the Soviets must help Pakistan send the Afghans back to their homeland. Left to itself, Pakistan probably would not insist on a regime change. It is still not insisting on this because Pakistan knows that it cannot force the Soviets to do something they could not afford to do. At the same time, there is a limit beyond which Pakistan cannot go. If the two sides can engage in give-and-take, an agreement should not be farther off than mid-'85.

One suspects that Yakub Khan's time and energy has been taken up with the Afghan issue and that he has not invested much of either in improving relations with India. The first meeting of the India-Pakistan joint commission might have produced better results if it had not coincided with Mrs Gandhi's election campaign in Jammu. She had to use Pakistan to dislodge the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from one of its strongholds. Some of her election speeches predictably fed those elements in Pakistan which do not favour a rapid improvement in India-Pakistan relations. For the moment, the go-slowers in both countries have stalled the progress of amity talks. But these talks have not been abandoned; they are being resumed in August. The meeting of the joint commission gave the two delegations enough opportunity to explore a vast field of potential cooperation to mutual advantage. The actual accords reached have been small, but in their totality they are not insignificant, particularly when connected with the golden labour of the South Asian Seven.

Pakistan's new strategic outlook gives it a more relaxed frame of mind than one found in Islamabad two years ago. Pakistan is trying to adopt a new foreign policy which would enable it to benefit from cooperation with both power blocs as well as the non-aligned world. Conversations with Pakistanis, within and outside government, reveal the depth of Pakistan's commitment to non-alignment. It is not a cosmetic mask to conceal the face of an ally of the United States. When a Pakistani says "We are non-aligned," there is a glint of pride in his eyes. Here lies hope for the future of India-Pakistan relations.

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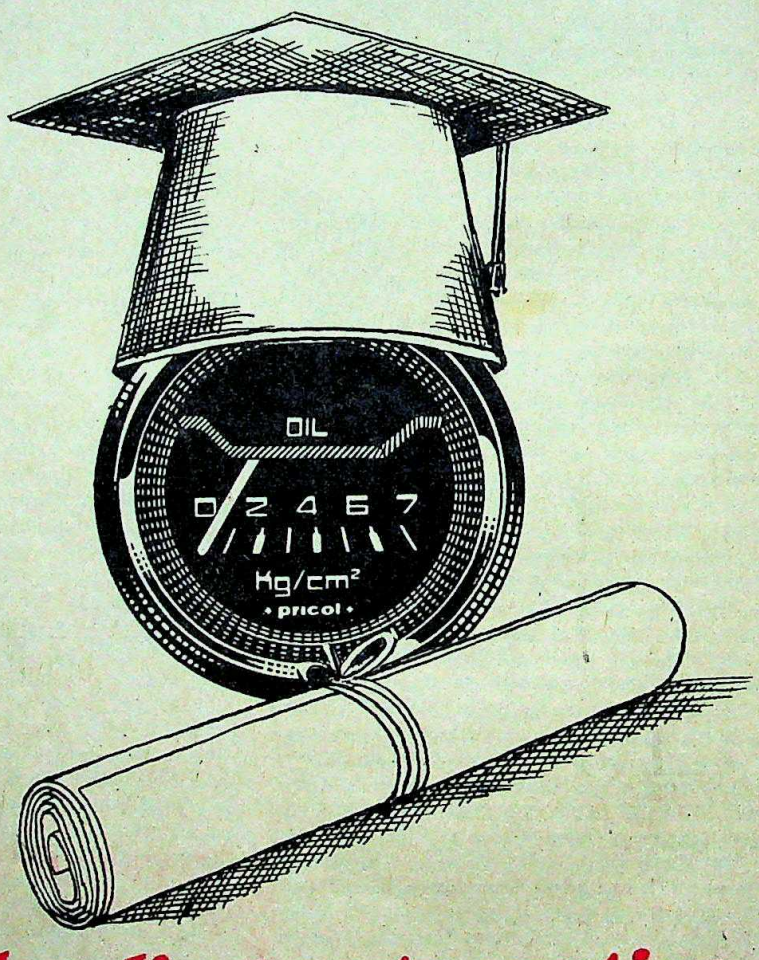

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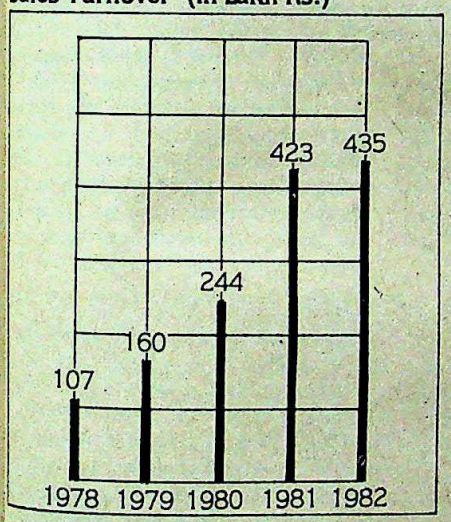
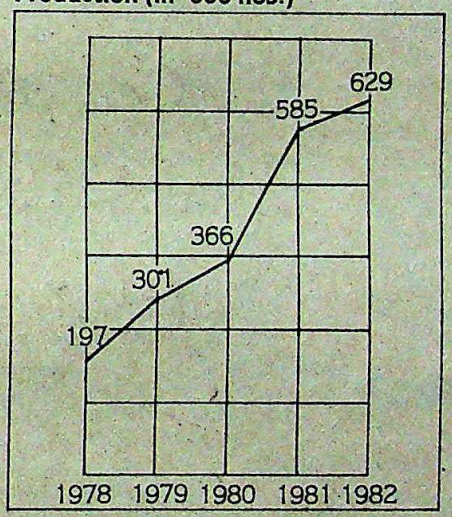


Production (in '000 nos.)



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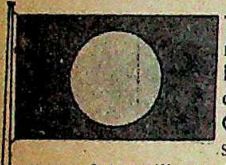
BANGLADESH

Hard Road Ahead

WHICH is the real Bangladesh? The one that Lt-General H.M. Ershad and his martial law administration describe in such utopian terms of what they plan to hustle through or the long-unchanging reality in the villages and district towns in the country? What exactly is the army's new role? And what are the currents that criss-cross Bangladesh's social and economic fabric? To gain some insight into these and related questions, veteran journalist CHANCHAL SARKAR *and his wife, Delhi University don* LOTIKA SARKAR *spent a fortnight travelling through the country recently which included a two-hour conversation with Ershad. Their impressions:*



TRAVELLING through Bangladesh is like looking at a three-dimensional picture. One dimension is the seriously articulated views of the military elite and the country's leader, Lt-General Ershad on the country and its policies. The other is what one gathers from places of different kinds and people of different views and the third is what the eye actually sees.

Take the proclaimed new role of the army. The martial law administration is undoubtedly eager to establish a glossy "People's Army" image. But at the same time, it would be highly premature to believe that the army is accepted as a dedicated development force sharing the hardships of the people. "We do not want to become the elite of the society," says Ershad. "We want to work in the fields and tell the people that we want to share their frustrations."

Army Luxury: But the telescope has another end, too. A brigadier and a joint secretary have roughly the same basic pay, about 2,750 taka a month. But military perks take the brigadier's earnings to over 5,000 taka. In addition, both officers and other ranks enjoy the advantages of free housing, rations, medical attention and schooling for children. For the public, rice costs roughly 300 taka a maund; the army pays 30 taka. It is calculated that the basic ration for an army family of five members works out to no more than 175 taka a month. Little wonder that the opposition leaders use terms like "cantonment luxury" and the "new class".

General Ershad: determined effort

Ershad talks of 50 model villages created by the army but that is no more than a sprinkle when one considers the fact that Bangladesh is a country of 68,000 villages. Similarly, the military hardly figures in conversations in the villages which focus always on things like employment, water, prices, the state of crops, bank credits and nutrition.

Martial law summary trials still exis in Bangladesh but business in those tribunal seems to have slackened. There is evidence pressure groups within the army—burn ing-eyed young officers with dialectic phrases and dogmatic ideas—but their in fluence is hard to assess. One reason is tha the military establishment is a tightly-kn and insular society and officers are polite bu wary of the foreign press.

The much-talked-about land reform have still to get off the ground. The Commi tee on Land Reforms set up under the Agr culture Minister A.Z.M. Obaidullah, sul mitted its report more than two months ag Its recommendations are hard revolutionary for a countr where 80 per cent of the peop are either landless or margin farmers. In prescribing t 75-bigha ceiling, the committe obviously did not take into ac count the views of the peop whose opinions were solicite One major roadblock facin land reform is the disorder state of land records. Howeve Ershad seems quite determine to go ahead with granting ten rial rights for a stipulate period to share-croppers.

Recovery Programmes: There is als serious effort being made to help the landle into working and earning. Spearheaded by quasi-government institution, the Gramee (village) Bank whose Project Director is Mohammed Yunus, a Chittagong Unive sity economics professor, and by no governmental organisations like BR

H.M. ERSHAD

The New Deal

BANGLADESH'S Chief Martial Law Administrator, Lt-General H.M. Ershad, quite understands that his country has a long way to go on the road to development and prosperity. Last fortnight, the Sarkars spoke to Ershad about his plans for Bangladesh and what he has been able to accomplish. Excerpts:

On the army's new role:

We do not want to become the elite of society. I want to tell the people that we want to be your brothers and sisters, to work in the fields, to work in developmental projects. We want to share your frustrations. We are part of you. That is what I want to tell the people – that this is your army, my boys are your children, they are not from outside, not Pakistanis. We want to change the perception.

On the landless and poor:

We will be able to decide in a day or two where we will fix the ceiling on land holdings: at 75 bighas or at 100. This point had arisen in President Zia's time.

We were wondering then whether the ceiling should not be 40 bighas. One shallow tubewell can irrigate 40 bighas and one deep tubewell can irrigate about 100 bighas. Ultimately nothing has been done. We ourselves have not taken a firm decision yet.

On a minimum wage:

How can we fix a minimum wage? We have so many unemployed here. Where there is no work how can you enforce minimum wages? But even if there is no minimum wage on the statute book it is expected that 25 taka a day will be paid to the day labourer. I think that in the case of women there is need to make it statutory. We cannot have them getting less.

On cultural exchanges between India and Bangladesh:

Many of our students are in Delhi University or Visva-Bharati. Why isn't there enough interchange despite cultural pacts? We have been together and we know each other. We are not different. We speak the same language and have more or less the same culture. Some irritations remain. There is always a fear in our minds that you are trying to exploit us, you are not giving us water, for instance. Our people don't look on this very well.

There is still the fear that you don't want us to go ahead, you want to deprive us of our rights. Then there is the religious barrier, we are Muslims and are the majority community. We still have a fear in our minds that perhaps you don't accept us fully, that you want to keep us under your thumb. The basic problems are fear and doubt because we are weak. because we are small and economically much backward. We have all the time in

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gladesh Rural Advancement Committheir efforts are stirring men and women ion. The total number of people reaby the Grameen Bank, however, is 0. The landless, in groups of five, are given loans without security for capital rt any of 300 different occupations.

On the overall economic front, the adtration also claims to have made purul strides. The economic slide, it alleas been checked and Ershad says that trial growth is up by 6.5 per cent in the six months. Denationalisation, he s, has stimulated investment. Foreign nge reserves are at their highest since but this, it should be remembered, is calculated against a devalued taka.

eething Poverty: But in the average or rural home, things are not so t. Ration rice, limited in quantity, is aka per seer while in the open market lls for 7.50 to 9.20 taka. Soya oil is 22 seer and mustard oil 28, onions 10 seer and masoor dal 12.25 taka a seer. s fiercely expensive.

n Bangladesh, over 80 per cent of the ation lives in absolute poverty and 50 nt is critically poor. Economic growth ar was just over 1 per cent. Obaidullah of self-sufficiency in food by 1985 but untry's paddy yield is about 17 maunds re which is a third of that achieved in east Asian countries and about half f China.

rshad communicates a determination pple with the problems. They are not a ss than what confronted his predecessvilian and military; and it is much too ther to cheer or to hiss.

ind a fear of you. Not that the ms cannot be solved.

ut let me tell you one thing. Our ons with Delhi are much less. There accepted very well. With you we feel not getting our share of water from nga. With you even as head of the nment I cannot visit our own peoTin Bigha.

n Islamisation:

lamisation' does not mean anythe point is religious teaching. You e majority here are Muslims and so ort of religious teaching should be ed in the syllabus. That does not Islamisation: that is just a phrase.

On whether there could be Pakistan-lamisation:

mpossible, impossible. I would only at our civilisation is different, our n is different, everything is dif. We are not like other countries. If ngladesh tomorrow you want to off hands you will be thrown out.

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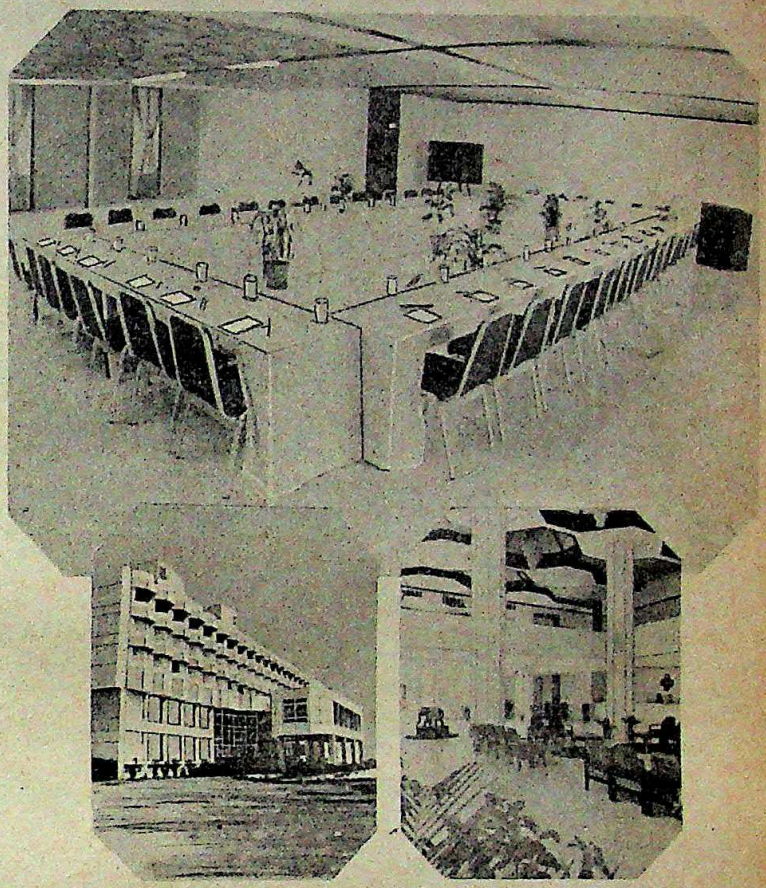

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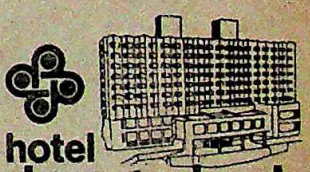

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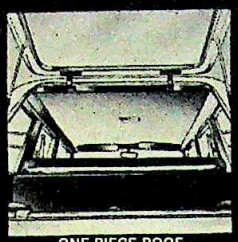
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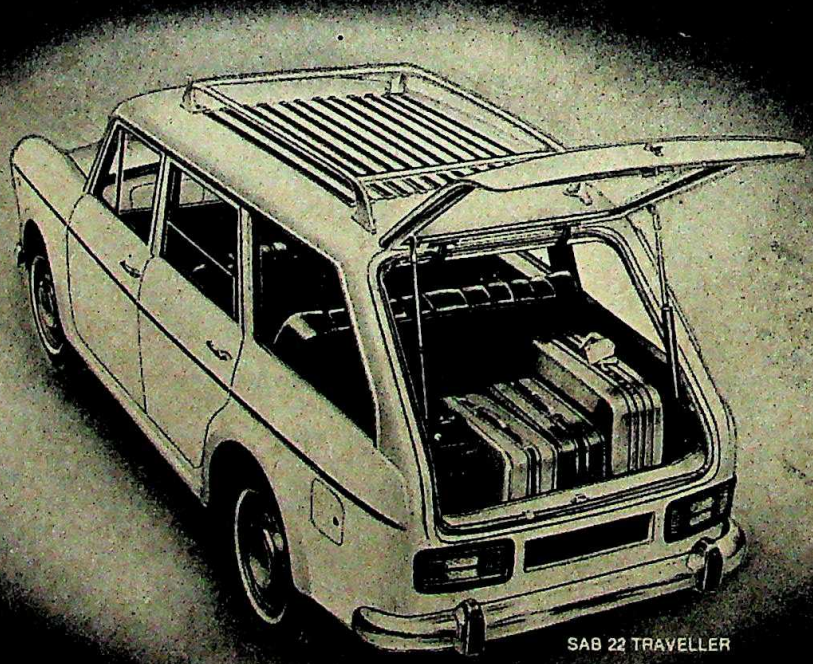
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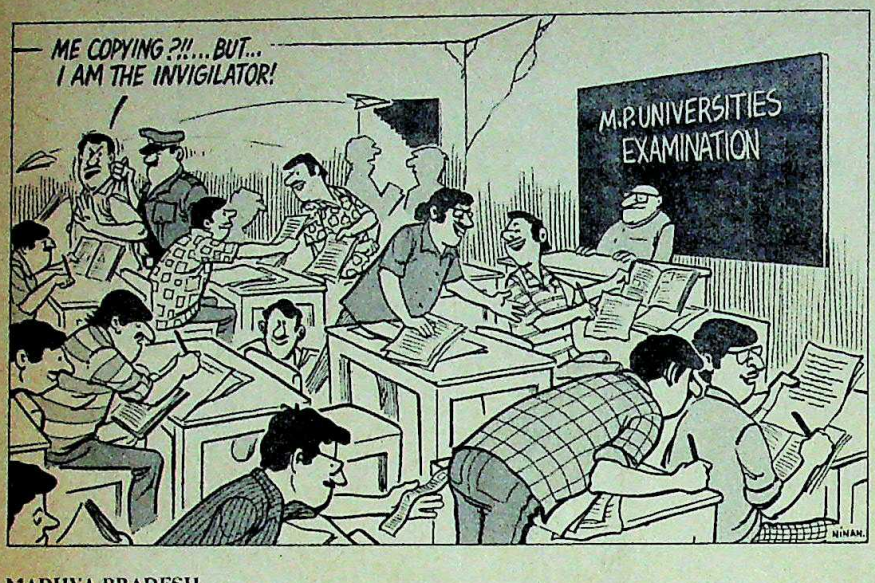

MADHYA PRADESH

Cracking Down

OFFICIALS in the state secretariat in Bhopal are currently working on certain legal amendments which, if finally approved, are more than likely to raise an uproar. The amendments, to the Madhya Pradesh Recognised Examinations Act, 1937, are designed to check the extraordinarily high incidence of copying in examinations, and will not come a day too early. Examinations, especially in universities, are gradually being reduced to a farce and a formality with cheating having acquired a general acceptance that is shameful. Under the proposed changes, a student caught resorting to unfair means will land up in jail, for as long as three years, or may have to pay a fine of Rs 5,000. If his offence is particularly blatant, he may both go to jail and pay the fine.

The idea actually grew from a similar but lighter law introduced by the Karnataka Government, which provides for a sentence which may stretch up to three months. In Madhya Pradesh, offences will be tried in a summary way by a judicial magistrate of the first class specially empowered by the state Government. In addition, a conviction will be treated as an act of moral turpitude and will bar the guilty from getting state government employment forever.

The proposed law will affect examinees of various examinations covered by the existing act—including National Cadet Corps and shorthand and typing examinations. But the most affected will be students of eight regular universities which have 362 government and private colleges. The state also has a university each for agriculture and music. The legislation will also cover the higher secondary examination for which 342,000 students appeared this year.

Mass Copying: In the last three years, in six out of the eight universities—for Avadesh Pratap Singh University, Rewa, and Vikram University, Ujjain figures are not available—a total of 16,771 students were apprehended while resorting to unfair means. Officials admit that the actual number of those who get away with it is certainly several times this. Jiwaji University of Gwalior leads the six; here, in the last three years, 4,437 students have been spotted copying. Sagar University, the scene of unending student demonstrations, is trouble spot number two with 3,254 instances.

The performance of students appearing for the higher secondary board examinations is almost as scintillating. In the last two years, 9,098 students have been collared by invigilators. The most severely affected again have been the northern-most districts: Gwalior division recorded 2,556 cases of the total, or more than a quarter.

Privately, academics admit that the problem really arises because of the greed of managements of private colleges which number 162 in the state. For them, education is commerce and the larger the student intake the better. Says an official of the Education Department: "They rarely make serious attempts to teach the students so that when it is time for exams they are ill-prepared and look to the college management to get them through." Invigilators are of the same college so arranging for a little assistance is no real problem. In some colleges, of course, invigilator would dare stop the cheating.

Private Ploys: Another factor is the ... vate student who studies on his own. He ... file his examination application form in ... college—a majority of them do so in priv... colleges because they get that institution ... the examination centre. This year, for ... first time, 2,300 private students in Bho... were dispersed to government college cen... during exams in an attempt to stop th... cheating.

In schools, the problem of the priv... school and the private student is much m... severe. There are 518 government-reco... sed private schools and of the 342,000 ... dents who appeared this year, an extrao... narily high number—113,000—were pri... students.

An even more curious phenomeno... the appearance of nearly 30,000 private c... didates who land up from Delhi, Pun... Haryana and Rajasthan. A senior officia... the board of higher secondary educat... says this is because "our syllabus is favo... ble". Which is a euphemism for deplor... standards and lax invigilation.

As in colleges, private students ... application forms from obscure m... government schools. The same official ... that some years ago this state of affairs le... the incongruous sight of affluent stud... driving down in imported cars to some sr... village school in Gwalior division. T... simply bribed the centre superintenden... have their way. Matters have somew... improved; since last year these enterpri... youngsters are being dispersed to o... centres. The logistics of keeping uns... pulous school managements in line ... particularly formidable since there are ... many as 1,234 exam centres all over Mad... Pradesh.

Lax Authorities: University vice-ch... cellors are reported to be in favour of the ... penal provision, because it is the easy ... out. Not one of the universities has tried ... simple device of allotting students ... examination centres in other colle... fearing protests from the unions. Simila... teachers are retained as invigilators in ... colleges in which they teach. The familia... between teachers and students results ... copying.

University authorities protest that t... cannot afford to pay for the travel of in... lators from one town to another. But th... not quite the truth. In 1981–82, Vikram U... versity's income from examination fees ... Rs 44.50 lakh—of which only Rs 11.50 l... was spent on the conduct of examinati... With such a hide-bound system, the ... measure now under consideration seem... be the only way out.

—SREEKANT KHANDE...

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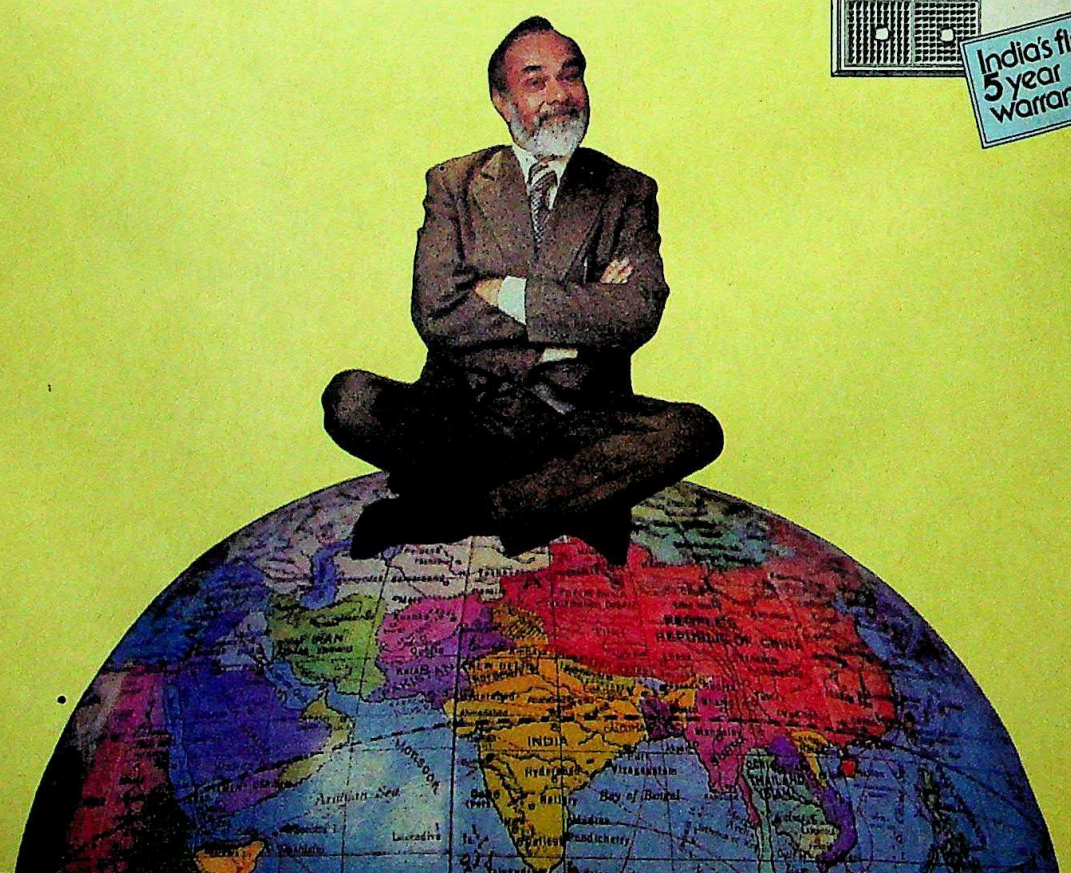

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The mysteries of nature...

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JIYAJEE 60

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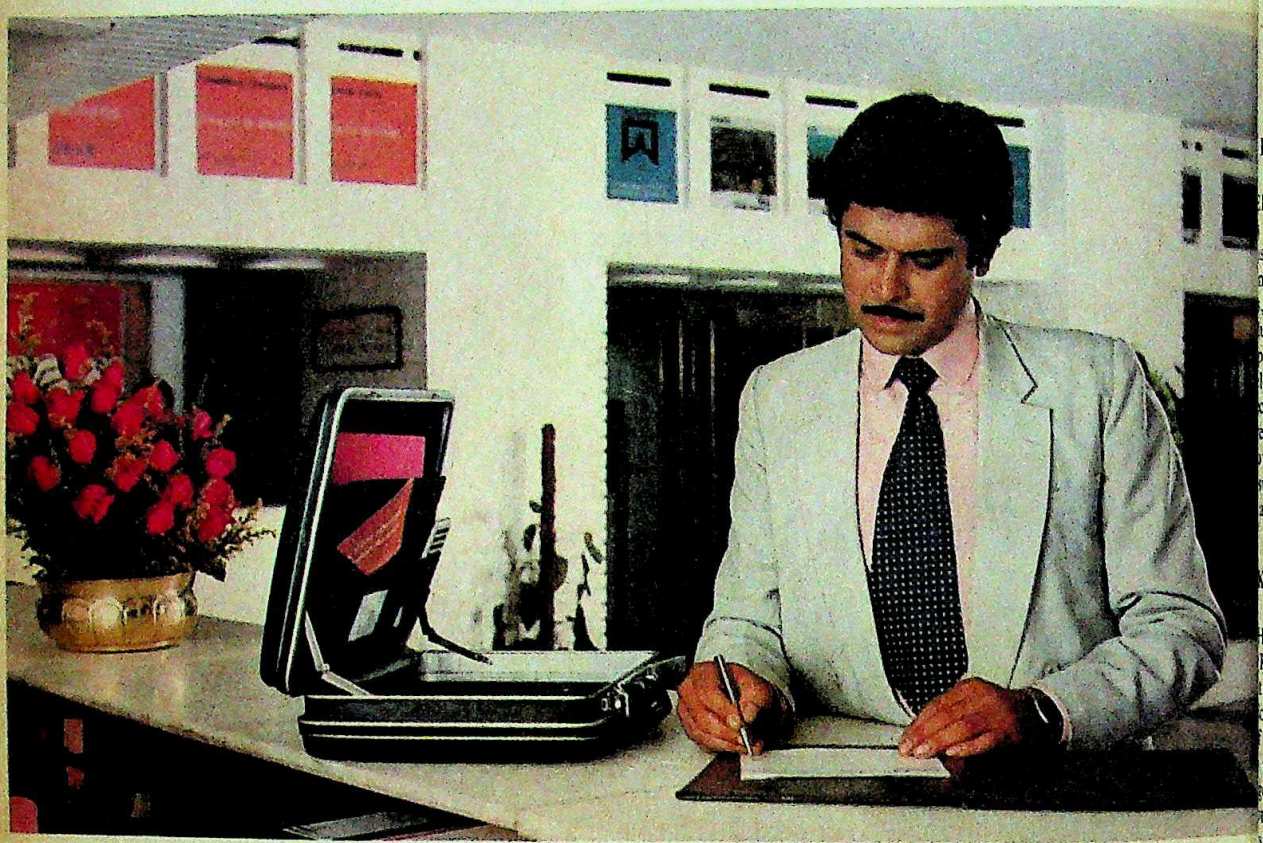

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PERSONAL POWER

COMPANIES are increasingly moving towards 100 per cent captive power generating capacity. Two recent examples are Goodyear and Hindustan Aluminium, though both are still waiting for official clearance. Apart from the perennial shortage of power supply from the state electricity boards, this shift towards captive capacity has been encouraged by the sharp increase in electricity board charges. J.K. Industries reports that in 1982 the company got full power for no more than 24 days, while the power rates in Rajasthan have gone up from 22 paise per unit in 1980 to 63 paise in 1983.

Captive power generation now accounts for 20 per cent of the power consumed by industry as a whole, while in cases like aluminium and paper it is even higher at 25 per cent. The latest trend is for companies to pool their resources and set up larger captive stations. Some companies in Tamil Nadu are jointly sharing a 210 mw power plant, while two similar arrangements may fructify in Bihar shortly, for capacities of 135 mw and 200 mw. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry has now suggested that such arrangements should be encouraged as a matter of policy.

HORIZONS

ICO Electronics and Electricals Ltd (formerly Philips India) moving rapidly to expand and diversify its activities. se on the heels of the numerous projects launched last year, ng the expansion of its transistor and bulb manufacturing ca-, the company has now sought the Government's permission uce 50,000 television sets annually—half of which the compa- poses to export. Peico is already constructing a Rs 10 crore lectronics complex in Calcutta to manufacture half a million ck mechanisms, one million magnetic tape heads and a mil- ect current micromotors. Apart from these, the company has ver the Electric Lamp Manufacturers (India) as a wholly ubsidiary, and has started marketing button cells and refrige- as well as a modern range of music systems.

MOVER

HE KERALA State Electronics Development Corporation Keltron) is an organisation in a hurry. In the last few months, has sought and obtained industrial licences and letters of or numerous items, signalling a concerted thrust into new professional electronics equipment. One major new area of will be the manufacture of electronic automatic telephone e equipment, with an annual capacity of 50,000 lines. Some ther new products to be manufactured include direct recep- items, surveillance monitors, ground fault monitors and rocess controllers. The corporation also plans to double its manufacturing capacity to 40,000. Yet other items for which ion facilities are soon to be installed include electrical actua- ter/gas quality analysers, intrinsic safety barriers and alumi- oride.

PROFITS CRUNCH

GE companies seem to be undergoing a steady squeeze on eir profit margins. The year 1980–81 saw the sales of 478 ompanies, each with a paid-up capital of over Rs 1 crore, rise per cent, while gross profits rose by only 10.7 per cent. Now a Bank study reports a repetition of this in 1981–82: sales rose per cent, but profits by only 15.4 per cent. Judging by the ge- ueeze on margins during 1982–83, this trend has probably ed for the third year running. Gross profits as a percentage of ve therefore dipped from 11 per cent in 1979–80 to 10.5 per 980–81, and still further to 10 per cent in 1981–82. The corre- g percentage for 1982–83 may well be down to 9.5 per cent. rofit ratios have witnessed a similar fall in recent years.

EXPORTS GLOOM

LAST year was the worst period for Indian exports since 1978–79, with virtually no growth being recorded in non-oil exports in the 11 months to February-end. (The official exports figures have been given an artificial boost by the export of Bombay High oil, for which however there are corresponding imports—because this is essentially switch trade.) The trade deficit is therefore in excess of Rs 5,000 crore for the third year running, and gives no indication of the structural changes that are supposed to be effected during the breathing-time given by the IMF loan of 5,000 million SDR's. The sharp increase in domestic oil production, in particular, seems to have had no impact on the trade deficit. The only silver lining is provided by the fact that imports too have remained virtually stagnant during 1982-83—but this could well be nothing more than a reflection of the sectoral recession last year.

THERMAL HOLD-UP

THE CONTROVERSIAL turnkey offer of a thermal power plant costing over Rs 800 crore to be installed at Chandrapur in Maharashtra by Brown Boveri of Switzerland may not finally be accepted. A lot of dust had been raised by the two-year-old offer because of alleged lobbying on its behalf by no fewer than three highly-placed individuals. But the Maharashtra Government (under a new chief minister) has now opted for a global tender. That still leaves Brown Boveri in with a chance, but since the domestic Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) is allowed a 15 per cent price advantage on global tenders, it is likely to walk away with the order.

Fresh inter-ministerial discussions have meanwhile been mooted on the other turnkey offers for thermal power stations, from countries like Italy, West Germany and France. All of them have been pending now for two years, but the energy minister set the ball rolling again in April. However, Finance Ministry officials are continuing to stonewall on the issue, arguing among other things that accepting these offers will mean an empty order-book for BHEL.

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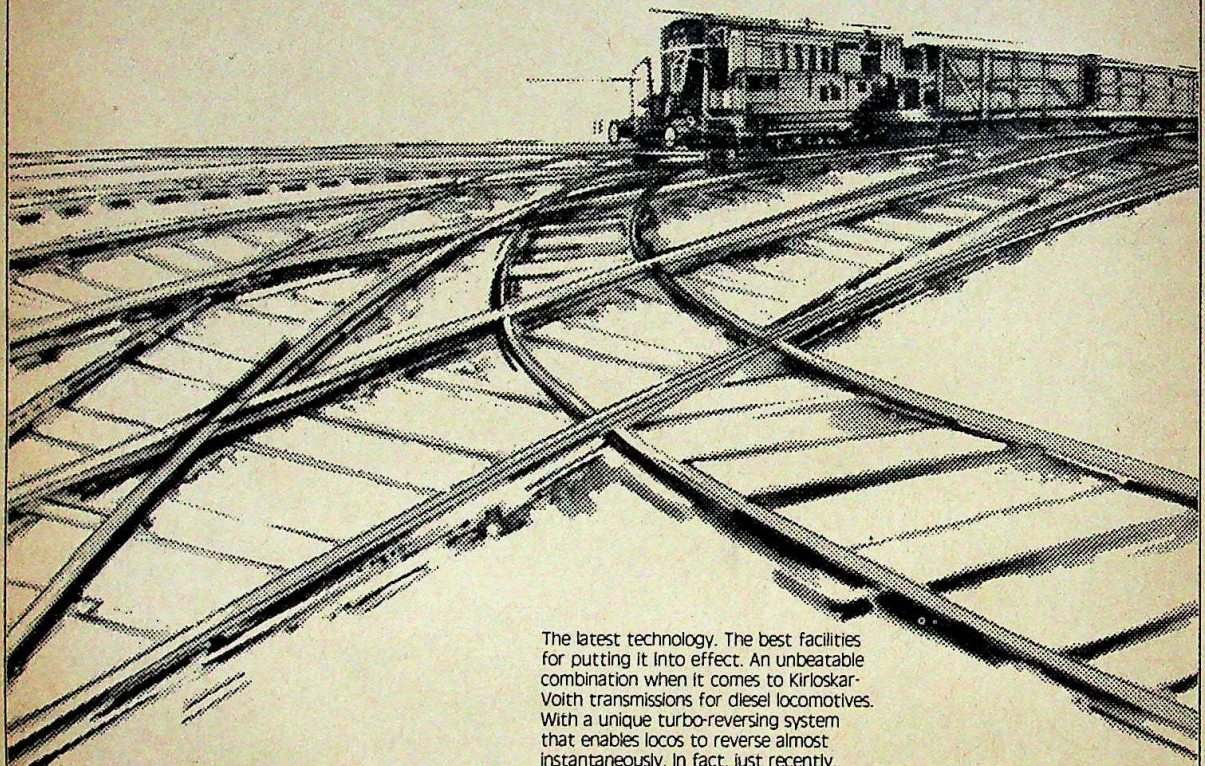

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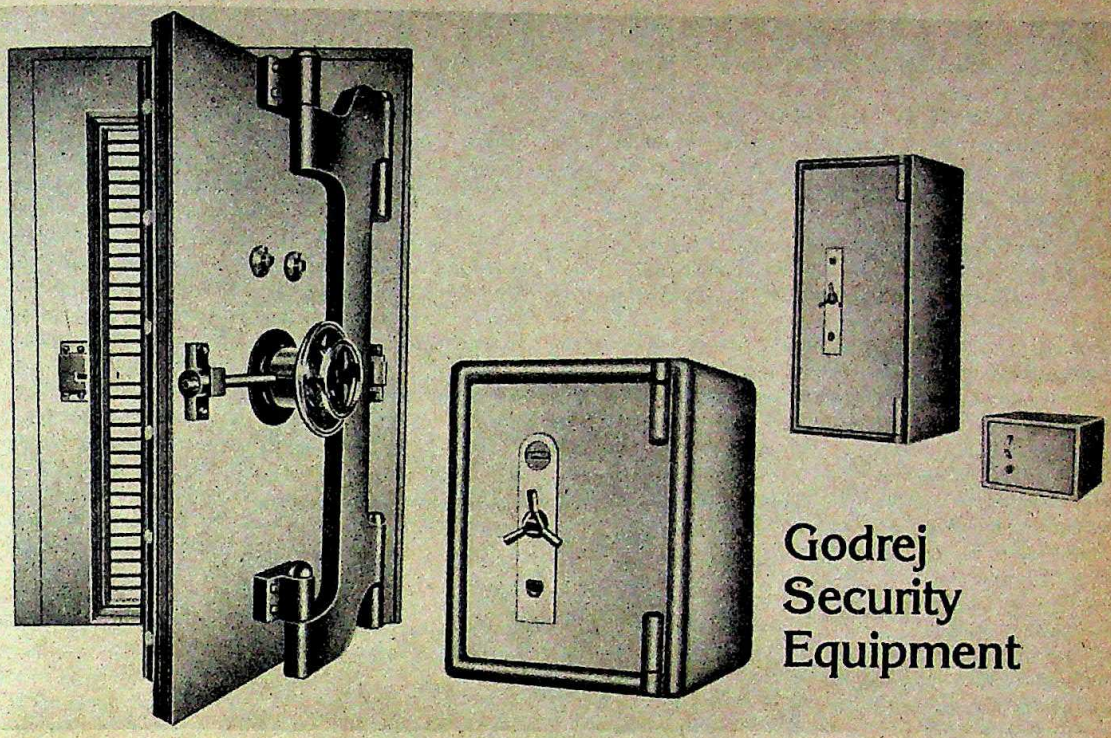

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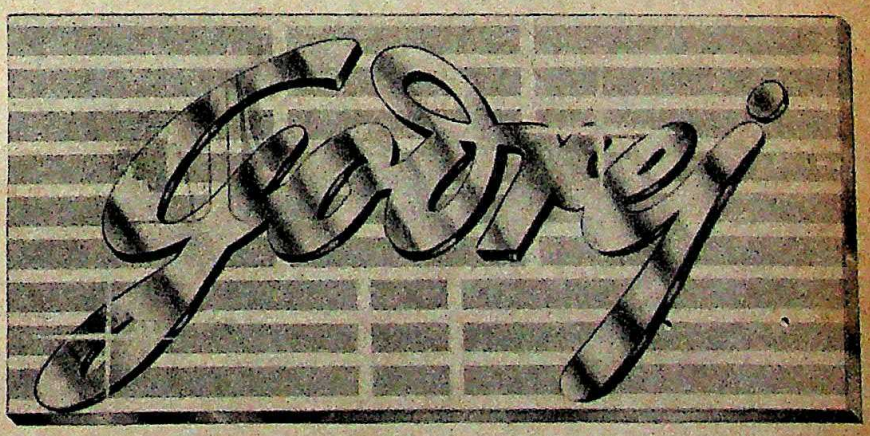

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FOREIGN AID

The Lending Trap

THE MONEYBAGS in Washington—members of the same tribe as the famous gnomes of Zurich—are once again flashing green signals to New Delhi and other embattled capitals of the impoverished Third World. Their message is loud and clear: come and help yourself. Why? Not because the Third World countries need the money which some of them may do, but because the bankers are flush with cash, more cash than they can use.

Munir Benjenk, vice-president of World Bank's external relations department was quite frank about it in a recent briefing for journalists in Washington. The Bank, he said, has the capacity to borrow much more than it is borrowing now and consequently the capacity to lend much more than it is lending now. It is, he said, perhaps the one major under-utilised factor in the present environment. "We say to the participants in Williamsburg: use it more." In other words: we have a lot of cash floating about in our vaults; for God's sake, come and get it.

Surplus Funds: How is it that the Bank has so much money when most countries of the world, including the United States, are strapped for cash? The US Government could certainly do with some dough to balance its books. President Reagan has to fight with the Congress for every penny he can get and is always being told that he should go slow on his deficits. At Williamsburg he was told in no uncertain terms that the large US deficits led to high interest rates and these in turn made the dollar so strong and other currencies so weak that the European governments were forced to run huge trade deficits and also devalue their currencies. It is one of those mysteries of the international money market that while most US banks are awash with cash, the Government itself is broke, and so are most other countries including such oil exporters as Mexico.

The question naturally arises: do we need all this money, just because somebody is pressing it into our pockets? There is hardly an issue of the *World Bank News* in which India does not feature as a borrower, and often the largest borrower. Only last week, the Bank approved loans totalling Rs 640 crore of which India was the largest borrower with Rs 400 crore. Out of this amount, Rs 250 crore will be used to improve the country's power transmission capability and the balance of Rs 150 crore to provide urban services for 6 million poor people of Calcutta which has become something of an international basket-case. A number of other loans have also been announced from time to time and a Bank spokesman was apparently so pleased with India's 'amazing' progress in economic recovery that he thought that the next annual meeting of the Bank-sponsored Aid-India group would be a cinch.

If there is no such thing as a free lunch, there is also no such thing as free aid. If you are too casual in accepting aid, just because the World Bank or some other organisation is overflowing with the milk of human kindness, you will also be too casual in spending it.

Unnecessary Aid: The question, however, still remains: do need the money? Most aid programmes, with the major exceptio petroleum development, have one thing in common—they have tually no foreign exchange content and their financing has to be d in rupees. The uplift of the poor in Calcutta does not really cal World Bank money. We have the necessary equipment management capability to do it ourselves. The Rs 400-crore gramme for setting up regional transmission grids needs very assistance from Washington. We are after all helping other coun in such programmes. Yet, we go on borrowing money on one pre or another.

Foreign aid was initially meant to bridge the ternal payments gap arising out of esse imports required for building up the indus infrastructure. Later, the emph shifted from development to mai nance and the so-called non-pr aid was also used for the purpose. the clever officials in the North B have discovered a new hurdle— alleged shortage of rupee resour Since their case is palpably w they are trying to sell the pac through such impressive-soun phrases as upliftment of the p employment generation, and r development. And the g signals in Washington keep flashing.

Slow Growth: Firstly, I am very sure whether the W Bank is not paying us a handed compliment by givi a good chit about our econo recovery. The year 1982–83 been bad all round. Foodgr production was dow 126 million tonnes—a cording to the latest cial estimate—w was also the figure ched five years ag 1977–78. For five years, therefore, we have more or less stood still, with a few ups downs in between, but that is not what is meant by 'recovery'. said that the monsoons have been playing truant, but the wea office people have denied that this is so. The office says that there been no change in the pattern of the monsoons for the last hun years, so that you can't really blame the drought on the rains.

Now, take industry. It is conceded that overall industrial gro may be no more than a measly 2 per cent. It was earlier expected around 4.5 per cent; that is what the Economic Survey publi three months ago said. The major contribution to industrial pro tion last year (1982–83) was by the oil industry. Crude productio creased by as much as 30 per cent, so much so that our oil refine could not cope with the flood.

In fact, but for the substantial increase in oil output, overa dustrial growth would have been negative, the same as in agricul Major industries like steel maintained a snail's pace of gro

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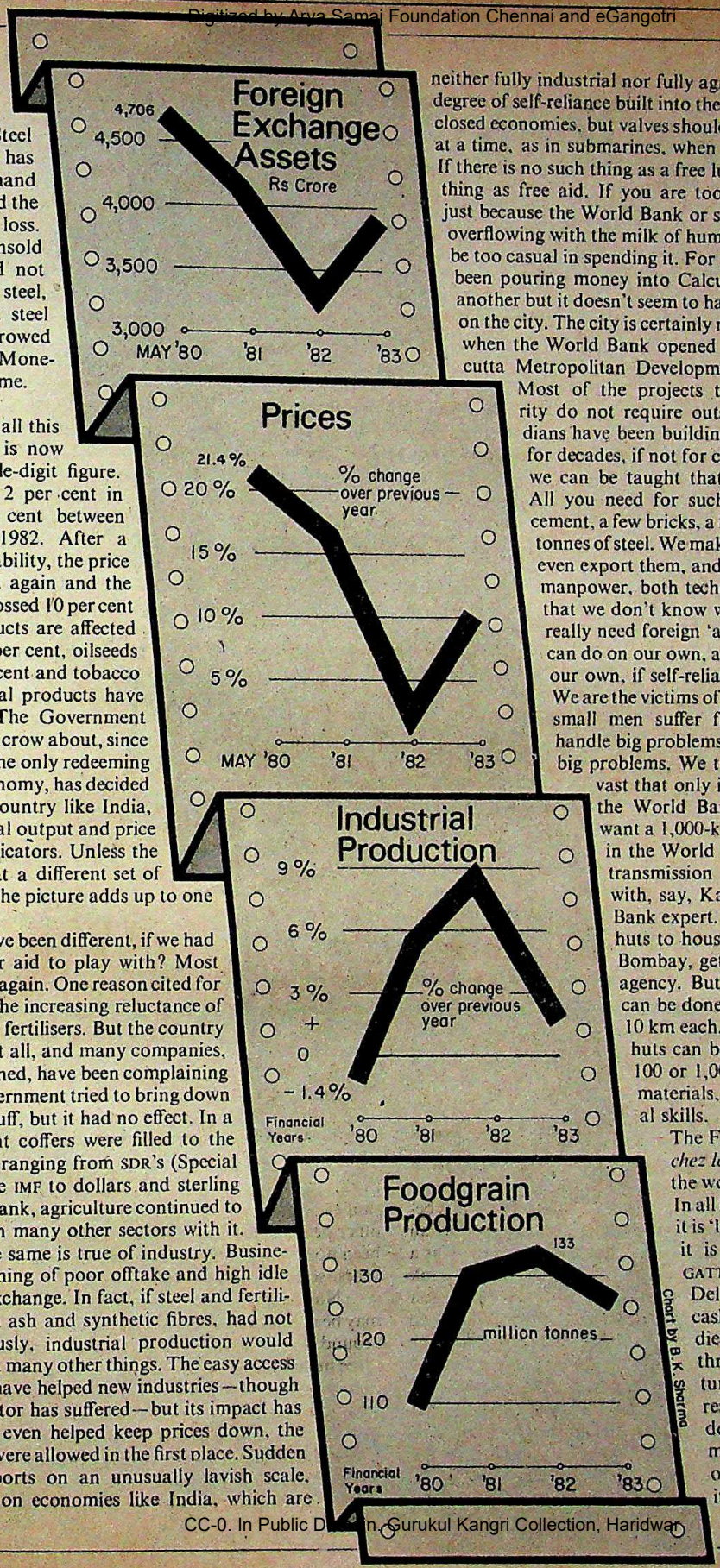

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nd by 3 per cent between
December 1982. After a
lative price stability, the price
aised its head again and the
ght to have crossed 10 per cent
y. Farm products are affected
ereals by 15 per cent, oilseeds
sugar 16 per cent and tobacco
But industrial products have
up in price. The Government
have much to crow about, since
ce indicator, the only redeeming
run-down economy, has decided
For a poor country like India,
ction, industrial output and price
the main indicators. Unless the
is looking at a different set of
not see how the picture adds up to one
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the picture have been different, if we had
n exchange or aid to play with? Most
ke agriculture again. One reason cited for
rm output is the increasing reluctance of
se high-priced fertilisers. But the country
of fertilisers at all, and many companies,
ell as state-owned, have been complaining
kes. The Government tried to bring down
porting the stuff, but it had no effect. In a
ch government coffers were filled to the
oreign money ranging from SDR's (Special
ights) from the IMF to dollars and sterling
n the World Bank, agriculture continued to
pulling down many other sectors with it.

Impact: The same is true of industry. Busine-
been complaining of poor offtake and high idle
t of foreign exchange. In fact, if steel and fertili-
mention soda ash and synthetic fibres, had not
ed so generously, industrial production would
ed, and with it many other things. The easy access
change may have helped new industries—though
ital goods sector has suffered—but its impact has
e. It has not even helped keep prices down, the
why imports were allowed in the first place. Sudden
e sudden exports on an unusually lavish scale,
ettling effect on economies like India, which are
neither fully industrial nor fully agricultural, but have a high degree of self-reliance built into them. I am all for opening up closed economies, but valves should be opened gently, a twist at a time, as in submarines, when they surface for fresh air. If there is no such thing as a free lunch, there is also no such thing as free aid. If you are too casual in accepting aid, just because the World Bank or some other organisation is overflowing with the milk of human kindness, you will also be too casual in spending it. For years the World Bank has been pouring money into Calcutta under one pretext or another but it doesn't seem to have made the slightest dent on the city. The city is certainly no better than it used to be when the World Bank opened its account with the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority.

Most of the projects taken up by the Authority do not require outside assistance at all. Indians have been building roads, latrines and huts for decades, if not for centuries, and there is little we can be taught that we didn't know before. All you need for such things is a little bit of cement, a few bricks, a few pipes and maybe a few tonnes of steel. We make all these things here, and even export them, and we have so much surplus manpower, both technical as well as unskilled, that we don't know what to do with it. Do we really need foreign 'assistance' to do things we can do on our own, and which we should do on our own, if self-reliance has any meaning?

We are the victims of a peculiar psychosis which small men suffer from when they have to handle big problems, or what they consider as big problems. We think our problems are so vast that only international agencies like the World Bank can solve them. You want a 1,000-km canal to be dug up, call in the World Bank. You want to lay a transmission line connecting Bombay with, say, Kanyakumari, call a World Bank expert. You want to build 10,000 huts to house the poor of Calcutta or Bombay, get a report from some UN agency. But surely a 1,000-km canal can be done in a hundred stretches of 10 km each, just as a colony of 10,000 huts can be taken in hand in lots of 100 or 1,000 huts. We have the raw materials, the men, the organisational skills.

The French have a saying: *cherchez la femme*, meaning look for the woman, if there is a scandal. In all international negotiations, it is 'look for the cash'. Whether it is UNCTAD in Belgrade or GATT in Geneva or NAM in Delhi, the main purpose is cash—cash through subsidies, cash through loans, cash through grants. This is unfortunate. Development requires money but more money does not necessarily lead to more development, and often, as in the case of India, it may lead to less.

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NON-RESIDENTS

Talking Terms

AS THE controversy over the role of non-resident Indians reached its peak in India, the Foundation for Critical Choices for India—a Hague-based non-political organisation organised a meeting of Indians settled abroad in Amsterdam, Holland to discuss the position and choices vis-à-vis India. During the two-day conclave the participants drawn from The Netherlands, Belgium, West Germany, UK and US dealt primarily with the question of transfer of capital and technology to India. Principal Correspondent PRABHU CHAWLA *flew down to Amsterdam to attend the conference. His report:*

"Non-resident investment in India last year was hardly 12 crore as against 5,000 crore outside In Why? Obviously something is wrong in Indian management. Government must rec its errors immediatel

—Dr Badri Madan, Foundation vice-president

IT DEFINITELY seems to be shaping into the year of the non-resident Indians. And with reason. The Government—suddenly alert to the tremendous finances, amounting to over Rs 30,000 crore, that Indians abroad control—wants to woo its alien sons back. Non-resident Indians, on the other hand, are more than willing to pump these funds back home. But on their own terms. On May 20, over 150 business giants and Indian executives living abroad congregated at Noordwijkerhoust, a picturesque little suburb of Amsterdam, to discuss the issues that matter. The conclave—organised by the Hague-based Foundation for Critical Choices for India—could not have been better timed.

Certain pressing issues needed to be urgently addressed—the role of non-resident Indians, the possibilities of technology and capital transfer to India and the yet more controversial demand by Indians settled abroad for dual nationality and voting rights. Since its inception in 1980, the Foundation has attempted to motivate these Indians to dedicate themselves to "the welfare and progress of India". But as the two-day meet wound to an end, it became obvious that what was uppermost in their minds was more the acquisition of shares in well-established industries of the country rather than a "modernize India" programme.

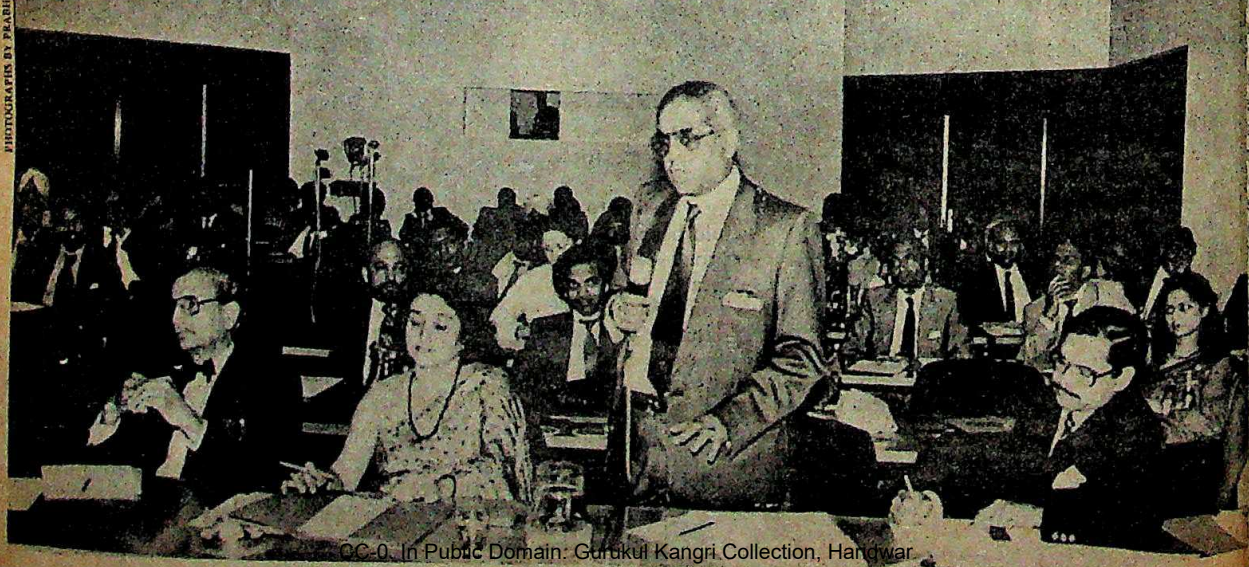
Disturbed Industrialists: Understandably Indians in India were worried. So much so that Har Parshad Nanda, the beleaguered chairman of Escorts Limited made a surprise appearance at the meeting. Explaining his stand on the alleged threat to his company from a non-resident Indian who had been furiously buying Escorts shares, Nanda said: "We welcome the non-residents' investments but not because we desperately need foreign exchange. Their main interest ought to be returns to their investment in an Indian company rather than its management."

"Why should I part with my hard-earned income by giving it to an Indian company if I can't secure the right to manage my share of the equity participation," ded Dr Badri Madan, the Foundatio president and a textile tycoon in with an annual turnover of over Rs "That doesn't mean that I intend over the management. It is a questio dibility of Indian industrialists which tunately is at rock-bottom at the m

As a result of the debate, one of lutions adopted at the meeting sta "while stimulating and encourag transfer of capital from non-resident to India, the participants were full that such a phenomenon might have bilising influence on the existing r ment. In this respect, the meeting t view that it is not in favour of such a lisation and would not encourage cially in the case of well managed e ses." The decision would have Nanda.

Great Potential: Non-residents, part, have become a force to reck both in terms of capital and techn

Escorts Chairman Nanda addresses the conclave: surprise appearance



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PRABHU CHAWLA

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Yet their investIndia are "peanuts" o Madan, as compadeposits and investforeign companies eading from a well d paper presented on the Foundation, d: "According to our non-resident Indians Rs 30,000 crore as deforeign banks as 1,000 crore in India. ents' investment in year was hardly Rs 12 gainst Rs 5,000 crore dia. Why? Obviously something is the Indian management. The nt must rectify its errors."

articipants, it was clear, shared a ove-hate relationship with the vernment. Said Ram Lakhina, 51, f the Foundation: "India needs capital and skill and fortunately untry of origin, we have both of undance. But only a favourable nt back home can atpeaker after speaker ing attacked the red e short-term fiscal d the inadequate into attract Indians ck home. Said K.S. West Germany baon liquid petroleum logy: "We have acenough experience t be used for India's nt. But whom should h for guidance and s. A letter written to in the Industry or Ministry is not remonths. When it comes, it is acby 200-odd rules and regulations uman mind or even a computer land." Moreover, the participeeved by the Indian Governal to make any firm policy regarsidents.

lly enough then, although the t needs their foreign exchange, it rnment's own policies that are se moneyed tycoons at bay. Said loharir, a senior lecturer at the Social Studies, Hague: "All of us d and butter. If India wants our en we must be assured of a better e are receiving currently." Added aturvedi, from the European rch Agency, Netherlands: "We to respond to India's needs but e inducement? We are like the s in search of an elusive bride

"India needs today both capital and skill and fortunately for our country of origin, we have both of them in abundance. But only a favourable environment back home can attract it."

—Ram Lakhina, Foundation president

YET, DESPITE the air of disillusion that hung over the ornate conference hall of the Leeuwenhorst Congress Centre where the meeting was held, participants talked enthusiastically of bringing the newest, freshest technology to outmoded Indian industry. "It is disgusting to find that a large number of Indian industries spend too little on research and development," complained L.R.K. Paul, head of the strategic planning cell of Shell International. "Ramshackle Ambassador cars have remained unchanged even after 30 years. Similarly many industries in India have not moved an inch towards self-reliance since 1950. Non-resident Indians can play an extremely constructive role as they now constitute a vast resource and brain bank outside India. Can't we tap our human resources for India's development?"

"Non-resident Indians can play an extremely constructive role as they now constitute a vast resource and brain bank outside India. Can't we tap our human resources for India's development?"

—L.R.K. Paul, head of Shell International's strategic planning cell

The meeting was able to identify areas where India could benefit from technology transfer from abroad—areas like population control, rural health care, sanitation and hygiene upkeep, an efficient public transport system. Said Lakhina, whose company has an annual turnover of Rs 14 crore: "Non-resident Indians have achieved a remarkable success in these fields abroad and they can considerably improve the lot of over 70 per cent rural population."

One policy that all the participants at the meet welcomed was the new tax policy under which non-resident Indians are taxed at a flat income tax rate of 22.5 per cent and no wealth and capital gains tax on foreign exchange assets. But, said Madan, "Tax concessions are not sufficient allurements for generating non-resident investments in India. There should be a long-term fiscal policy." Among other things, the meeting demanded:

- ► Simplification of the tax laws and investment policies.
- ► Investment by a non-resident Indian should not be treated at par with other foreign private investment.
- ► The capital brought into India by non-resident Indians for investment should not be subject to any estate duty.
- ► Establishment of investors' consortia of non-resident Indians in various regions.
- ► Specific assurance against expropriation, even against compensation of their capital, at least for 20 years, to be given by the Government.

Selfish Approach: That non-resident Indians wanted a rather large chunk of the cake was clear. Especially in their desire to hold dual nationality. The meeting endorsed the view that the Indian Parliament should enact legislation for opening up that possibility. Earlier the Foundation had submitted a petition to the speaker of the Lok Sabha demanding voting rights to non-resident Indians. But the Election Commission had discarded the request as neither practical nor legal. Said an incensed Election Commission official: "Non-residents want to have the best of both worlds. While living abroad in luxury and comfort, they also want to retain their Indian citizenship."

"They want too much from us," agreed an Indian diplomat based in London. "Their total approach is selfish. Since they are uncertain about their future and feel threatened, they want a second base in India which they left in search of greener pastures."

Lakhina, however, continued to insist that Indians settled abroad were more sinned against than sinning. Said he: "We have everything to lose in the beginning and nothing to gain if we invest in India. But our roots are in India and we will be happy to see it growing, but not to our own peril." The meeting in Holland made one thing clear. If the Government wants a beneficial relationship with non-residents it must change its wooing tactics. Before they change their minds.

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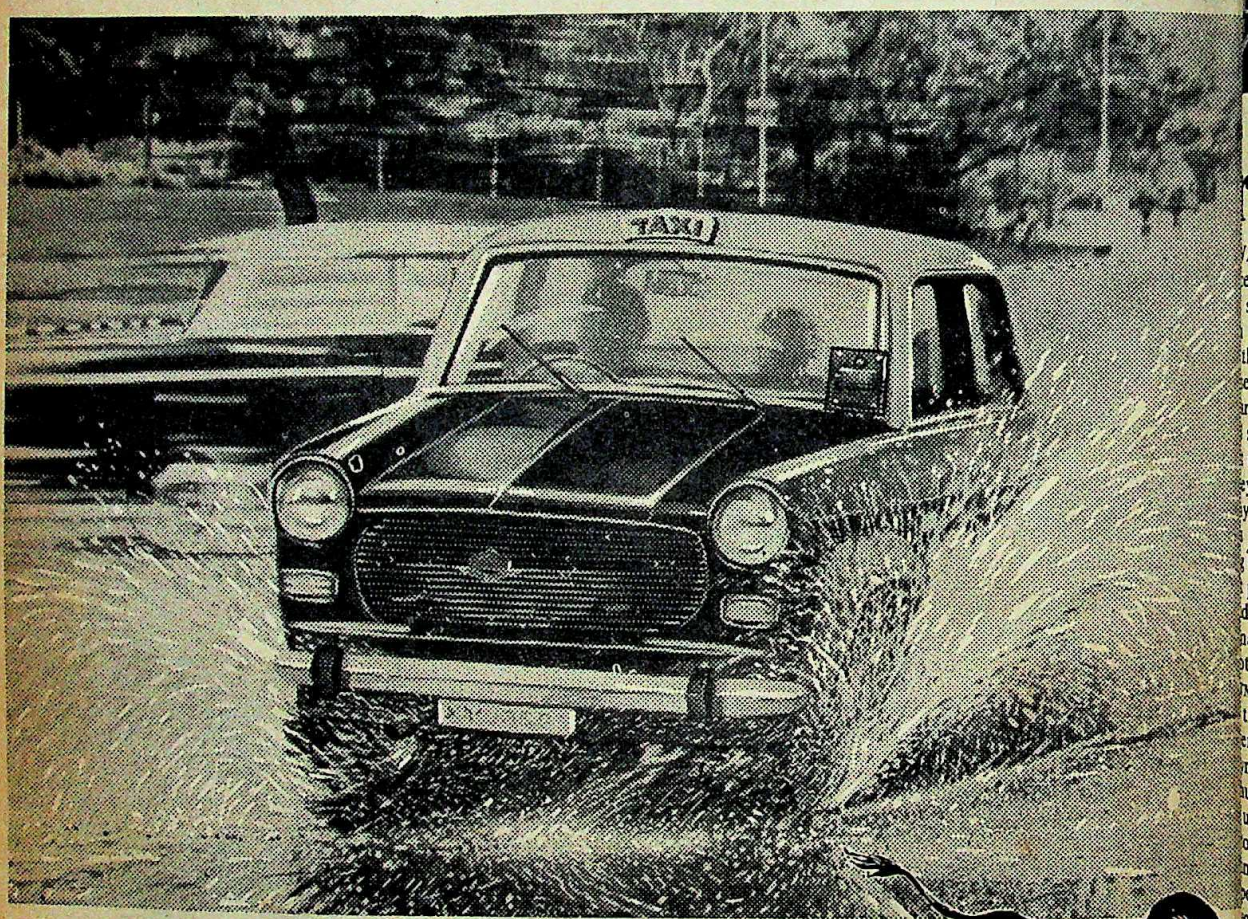

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rice War

AS a rude disturbance of the quiet
e atmosphere of Goodyear India, on
south-eastern outskirts of Delhi.
hundred burly truck operators
through the glass door and deman-
ee Goodyear Chairman V. Naraya-
rayanan was not in, so the truckers
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day and left.
y were back on schedule. Sipping
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sat in the Goodyear boardroom,
to Narayanan justifying the 5 to 10
price increase that the tyre compa-
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nan, who is also chairman of the
tive Tyre Manufacturers Associa-
MA), was his usual persuasive self,
truckers were unconvinced.
r the next few days, they visited
re company offices in Delhi—alle-
umping tables in one of them and
up an office employee. The agitation
o other towns: Jaipur, Indore, Bom-
medabad, Calcutta. No tyre compa-
ed the clear warning that was inten-
k operators would not tolerate any
in tyre prices.
e confrontation, building up for
an a year, soon boiled over as the
ment stepped into the act. Respon-
representations from the All India
Transport Congress (AIMTC) and the
re Traders Association (DTTA), both
ndhi and Industry Minister Narayan
wari called for quick action. A letter
nt out to the industry, asking it to
d the price increase. But striking an
tedly stiff stance, the companies first
and then stonewalled.
conflict escalated. The angry

FINANCE MINISTRY

Departures

THERE are farewell parties galore these days—but few welcoming ceremonies—in the Finance Ministry's crucial Department of Economic Affairs. One senior officer after another has made his departure in recent weeks, often leaving behind an empty chair and an overflowing 'In' tray.

The Government is busy negotiating the third and most important tranche of the IMF loan (for Rs 2,300 crore), seeking a massive precedent-setting loan from the Asian Development Bank and an expected Rs 3,700 crore from the Aid India Consortium (which meets in Paris this month). But the officers who are supposed to negotiate these gigantic financial packages are either not there, or being shuffled around in a suddenly activated game of musical chairs. By the end of this month, virtually every senior officer's room in the department will have either a new incumbent, or none at all.

Unfilled Posts: Finance Secretary M. Narasimham is giving way to P.K. Kaul later this month, while the Additional Secretary, S.V.S. Juneja, handed over charge at the end of last month to J.S. Baijal. Of eight joint secretaries, no fewer than four have left in recent months. A fifth if on extended leave on medical grounds. Only two have been replaced.

Thus, G.K. Arora, who was in charge of the World Bank-IMF division, left in early May to join the prime minister's office. His post remained vacant for a month. R.P. Kapoor, who looked after the European Economic Community desk, was bade farewell at the end of May, and had no immediate successor. Yogesh Chandra (America-Canada) left some time ago, and again there is no successor. M.M.S. Srivastava (who looked after foreign commercial borrowings) is on leave on account of a heart operation, but has no stand-in. Finally, A.C. Tewari (budget) has been replaced by A. Rangachari.

Even middle-rung slots are falling vacant, or will do so soon. Two of the three directors handling World Bank-IMF issues left some time ago, in January and in March. Both posts are still vacant. Two other directors are expected to leave soon on assignments abroad.

Key Vacancies: These are all key slots, involving multimillion rupee aid and loan deals with some of the most powerful countries and best organised institutions in the world. But the department is in a state of flux, with junior officers often complaining that there is no one to vet their decisions.

Already, the department has gone without proper representation at key inter-ministerial meetings about projects involving external finance. And a senior World Bank official who came to Delhi last month for discussions preparatory to the Aid India Consortium meeting found that the joint secretary he was to deal with had moved elsewhere.

The outgoing officers were frequently men of distinction, proving their mettle in a coveted department that has a tradition of getting the best—or most influential—civil servants. Narasimham, gifted with a quicksilver mind, was India's executive director on the IMF board when the Rs 5,000 crore loan was negotiated in 1981; Juneja is a seasoned veteran of the department, having put in at least one stint before this last one; and Arora has always stood out as an outstanding officer, winning personal praise in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly for his work as state education secretary before he moved to Delhi, so it seemed natural that Mrs Gandhi should want him in her secretariat.

Among the newcomers, P.K. Kaul is a reluctant successor to Narasimham, believing it to be something of a comedown from his present perch as defence secretary. Juneja's successor, Baijal, has been in the department before—and his experience could prove valuable for a senior level team that is new at its high pressure job.

Uncertain State: Even before the latest changes, the department had been in an unsettled state. Narasimham seemed on his way out almost immediately after he took charge last year, and has been given the coveted designation of finance secretary only a month before his departure. Earlier, he was simply secretary, economic affairs.

The departures have been for a variety of reasons. Narasimham is leaving on personal grounds, while Juneja—like some others, including Yogesh Chandra—has been eased out following Mrs Gandhi's directive that no officer should be in Delhi for more than five years. Others are moving out on promotion, Kapoor being one case. And yet others are going on postings abroad.

Why have so many of the vacancies not been filled without delay? Insiders give two reasons: one, people have been simply sitting on the files; and two, there are so many aspirants to these coveted posts that the administrative people in charge find it difficult to choose.

—T.N. NINAN

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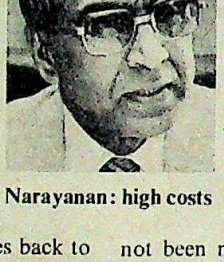
truckers threatened to surround Udyog Bhavan (which houses the Industry Ministry) with their trucks unless the prices were rolled back. They barged into officers' rooms and demanded immediate action. The companies, meanwhile, stopped releasing new tyres on the market. There were angry face-offs between company heads and government officials. Finally, annoyed at the persisting defiance, the Government threatened to clamp price control on the industry and import millions of tyres unless the companies behaved. The drama dragged itself out for a full fortnight before the companies finally relented.

That seemed to mark the latest victory for the truck operators in what has been a steadily escalating conflict, the origins of which date back to the 16 successive price increases announced by the tyre companies between 1977 and 1982. The last of these, in July 1982, opened the floodgates of consumer revolt. Rising protest and a threatened boycott forced one tyre company after another to announce a series of price reductions, taking the price level to that prevailing in September 1981. With the latest price increase (which sought to take prices back to the July 1982 levels) also proving abortive, and given the concessions on tyres that are freely available in the market, the effective price level is that of May two years ago.


Narayanan: high costs

Said Narayanan: "Tyres are about the only commodity whose prices have remained at the level existing two years ago. And our own raw material costs have been shooting up. Natural rubber cost Rs 12 per kg last September, but now costs Rs 18; and the Government last month imposed a new duty on nylon fabric. These two items account for 70 per cent of our raw material costs. We tried to raise the prices only because we could not absorb these increases any more. But now that we have abjectly surrendered, we are anything but sitting pretty."

Adds Ravi Mammen, corporate planning director of MRF: "Between 1977 and 1983, when tyre prices went up by 87 per cent, the total raw material cost for the tyre industry went up by 108 per cent."

But the truckers are not convinced. Argues Chittranjan Dass, secretary-general of the AIMTC, which has 300 affiliated member-associations: "If what the tyre companies say is true, then they should all have folded up by now. Instead, their latest balance sheets show that most of them are making profits. In fact, most of them have improved their profitability last year."

Adds S.P. Singh, secretary of the DTTA: "The tyre companies say the present prices are not remunerative. Then why are they giving discounts to the dealers? Even after giving these discounts, they are still making a profit."

The Government has sought to settle these conflicting viewpoints by referring the issue to the experts in the officially constituted Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices (BICP), which has been asked to submit two reports within a month: the first on the effect of tax rates increased by the Government, and the second on the cost increases that the industry cites. But, oddly enough, neither of the opposing parties is very happy with this situation.

Narayanan expects that on the basis of the cost increases that the BICP must take note of, it may well justify a 20 per cent increase in the price of tyres. "But what will we do with a 20 per cent price increase when, even at the current prices, we find it difficult to sell our tyres? In today's market, there is no way we can give effect to a 20 per cent price increase."

The truckers and traders have their own reasons for doubt. Says Singh: "Last year also the BICP had given in a report on tyre pricing. This has not been made public, but we understand that the report justified a price increase at a time when the industry was in fact reducing prices. These reports have no value."

Both the industry and the truckers/traders are, however, agreed on one point: that the solution to the tyre price problem lies in reducing costs, including taxes. The Government has already conceded this, for at a meeting with the companies in early June the decision was taken to allow more imports of natural rubber and to slash the customs duty on these from 81 to 35 per cent. The Government is also considering the companies' request to slash the excise duty on tyres from 66 to 50 per cent, as well as other suggestions to slash duties on various raw materials that go into a tyre. A tyre company spokesman pointed out that excise revenue from tyres had gone up from Rs 288 crore in 1980-81 to an anticipated Rs 500 crore this year. "We are now the second biggest source of excise revenue, despite the fact that tyres are an essential item in the core sector." Mammen of MRF says truck tyres attract total taxes of a staggering 120 per cent. "Without taxes, the price of a nylon truck tyre to the customer will be only about Rs 1,700, instead of Rs 4,000 or so."

Restrained Violence: Whatever the problems over costs and pricing, last fortnight's drama with its overtones of restrained violence would hardly have materialised if the trucking business was not going through lean times. The industrial slowdown, poor crops as well as the improved performance of the railways have together set to bring about a sharp reduction in the goods moved by road. Dass of the AIMTC says trucking rates have shown virtually no increase for the last three years. "When business was good, truck owners did not mind paying even the black market rates for tyres. But today they cannot afford the price. That is why they are angry. So they begin to ask the tyre companies questions about the prices they are being asked to pay." Mammen in fact feels that this is only "natural".

In the process, however, the questions have gone beyond merely that of price. The AIMTC and the DTTA are also questioning what appear to be dubious practices indulged in by the tyre companies: the underinvoicing of a part of the production while clearing the goods at the factory gate, and marking them—sometimes in code—as "economy" or "seconds" tyres, and the collection of steadily increasing sums as manufacturing expenses (according to Singh of the DTTA such expenses have multiplied tenfold in the last three years). The steps are aimed at reducing excise liability, but traders allege that the benefit of the reduced tax burden does not in most cases reach the customer.

Through the welter of such charges, a central fact emerged: if acrimony had abated because business was bad, peace would not return till trucking became profitable once again.

—T.N. NINAN with bureau reports

THE MARKETS

Buoyant Bulls

ADAM Smith may have faded away long ago but his famous invisible hand is still at work, particularly in Dalal Street. The share market has been buoyant for the past few weeks and the bulls are apparently just about ready to jump to the moon. Adam Smith is active in Washington too where the World Bank, in one of its periodical reviews of the Indian economy, has said that India's economic performance has been amazing. The Bank is pitching in with an aid packet of Rs 2,000 crore which is more or less what it gave in a year. This should boost share prices all along the line and may even help carry the *Economic Times* Index close to 300. At the moment it is hovering around 270.

The non-residents have been very much in the picture and are probably still quite active behind the scenes though no one knows for certain. In Delhi, Delhi Cloth Mills and Escorts have not yielded an inch and

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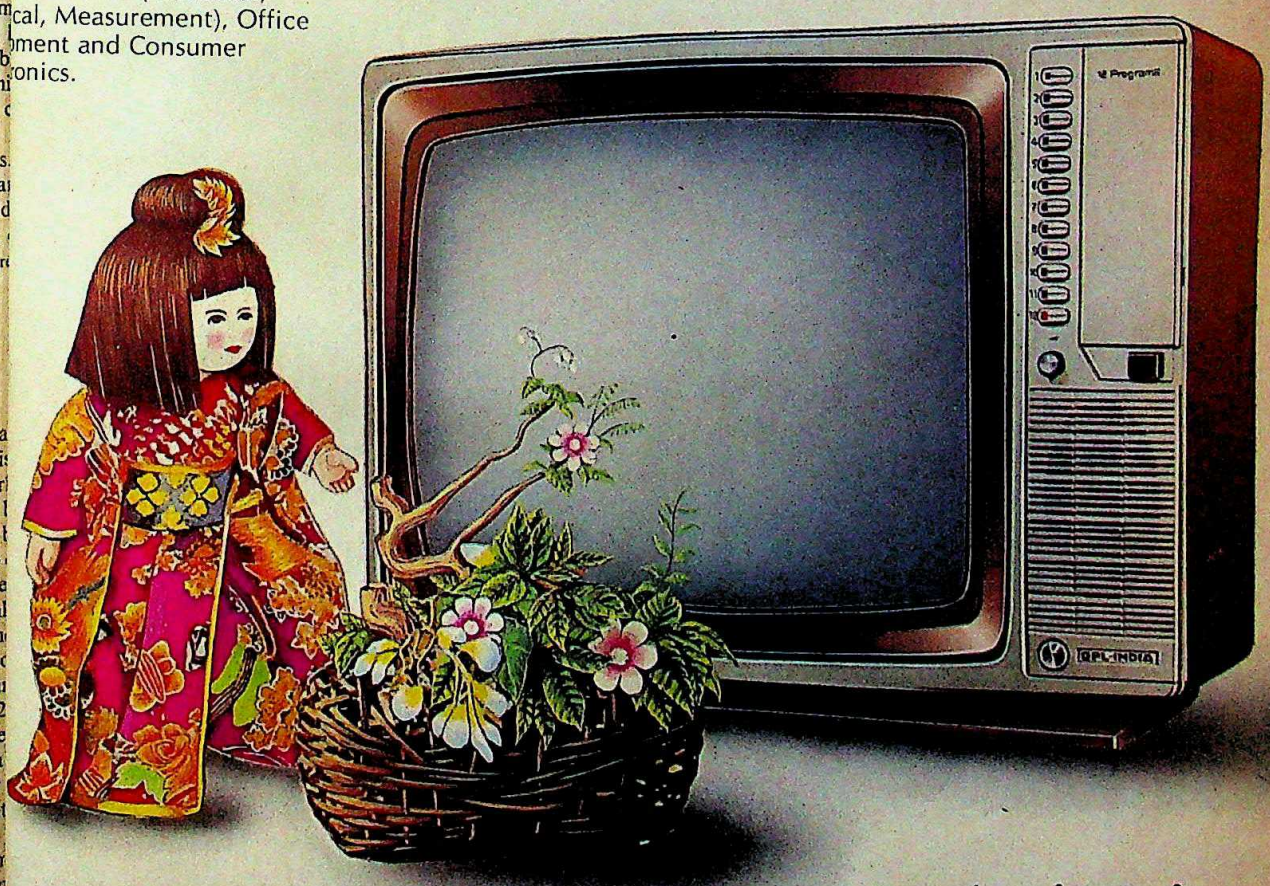

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A woman expresses herself in many languages.
Vimal is one of them.

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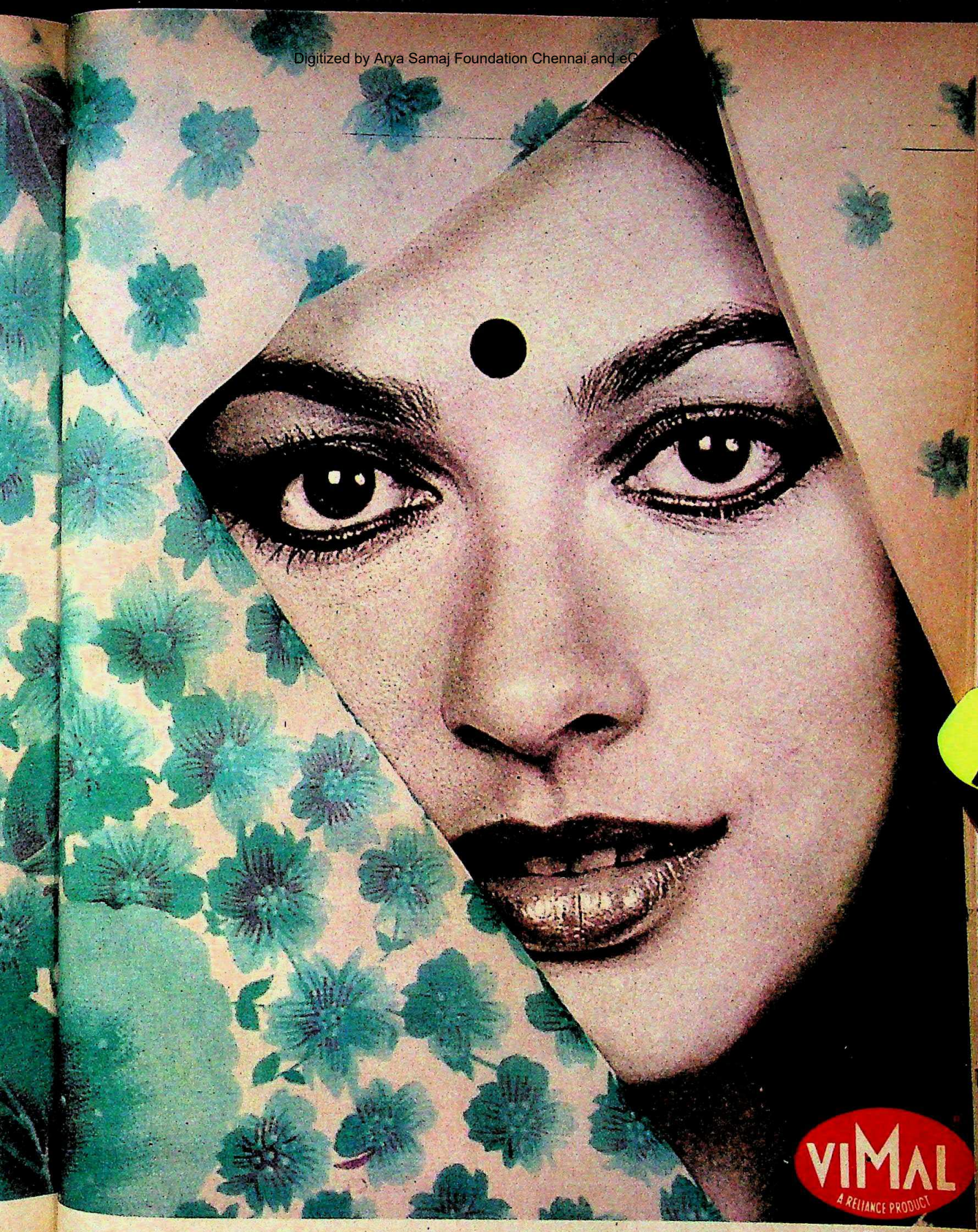

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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1983	Low	Close 4.5.83	Change on Fortnight
Sarabhai	17.75	13.25	14.75	1.25
ryland	37.65	30.50	35.50	1.00
ints	35.00	30.50	34.50	nil
ed Cement	451.00	350.00	444.00	5.00
pco	30.00	25.00	28.50	(0.50)
to	1,470.00	1,025.00	1,329.00	(56.00)
r	48.50	37.40	45.50	2.00
Rayon	312.00	210.00	275.00	(5.00)
ia	26.00	18.05	25.30	(0.10)
e	55.00	47.10	53.40	(0.20)
Dyeing	75.00	57.50	65.50	(1.50)
Industries	36.45	23.75	28.00	1.50
Bond	30.70	26.00	30.10	0.40
Mills	246.50	190.00	220.00	20.00
es	235.00	195.00	225.00	(5.00)
Spinning	862.50	695.00	850.00	7.50
India	61.50	51.00	61.50	3.00
	95.00	84.00	95.00	1.50
oth Mills	91.81	32.31	91.81	2.94
ndia	26.90	20.10	26.80	2.70
ia Hotels	29.00	20.00	25.62	(1.75)
	80.62	39.75	79.50	6.25
ecialities	70.50	60.50	70.00	0.50
	31.50	20.00	22.50	0.50
en Williams	21.75	18.05	21.10	0.30
Fertilisers	490.00	429.00	450.00	(1.00)
Rayon	52.00	45.00	47.00	nil
n Aluminium	40.35	32.10	40.00	2.50
n Lever	69.00	51.75	69.00	7.00
n Motors	35.10	26.40	33.14	0.98
luminium	22.10	16.25	21.10	1.10
able	24.30	21.80	23.80	0.90
xplosives	26.20	22.00	25.10	0.20
rganic	35.00	25.50	32.50	1.00
xygen	34.50	30.40	34.50	0.75
Rand	87.00	78.00	85.00	1.00
	44.85	32.50	33.25	(0.75)
Tea	32.30	20.35	30.10	1.45
thetics	57.50	32.00	37.50	(2.00)
r	87.00	70.00	84.00	(2.00)
	68.10	57.30	64.40	(2.50)
ngineering	163.00	68.00	77.00	3.00
(Madras)	24.00	18.00	23.50	1.50
Toubro	73.00	52.00	68.50	3.50
	26.05	14.00	26.05	2.30
achines	61.50	42.50	61.00	2.75
Coats	22.60	16.00	16.40	0.40
& Mahindra	64.50	42.00	64.50	10.00
bber	35.37	22.69	30.62	0.87
dustries	292.50	225.00	270.00	7.50
Iron	24.50	19.75	23.50	nil
	26.00	20.35	24.50	(0.25)
Organic	207.50	160.00	175.00	(10.00)
	39.50	34.00	38.00	(0.50)
per	48.00	40.20	48.00	2.00
ctronics	30.00	24.70	28.00	(1.00)
Auto	376.00	229.00	293.00	3.00
	44.00	36.00	44.00	2.50
	48.00	36.50	45.00	1.25
	183.00	154.00	157.50	(6.75)
n Rand	25.50	19.00	25.12	1.12
llace	42.00	33.20	42.00	0.75
Fibres	38.75	27.75	37.81	1.56
	24.50	15.25	23.85	3.85
oducts	47.00	38.30	46.20	1.45
micals	67.00	49.50	54.50	nil
el	321.00	237.00	321.00	18.00
	455.00	350.00	416.00	(14.00)
	53.00	38.00	51.50	5.25
estments	18.00	16.00	16.50	nil
rbide	25.10	21.50	24.90	1.90
rtin Black	26.50	22.00	24.50	1.50
	315.00	262.00	314.00	1.00
negar	19.50	15.00	19.00	1.50
pro	29.75	22.40	29.75	1.75
el (sale)	14.10	13.20	14.10	nil

apparently still being traded across the counter furiously. In Bombay, scrips like Larsen & Toubro, Mahindra & Mahindra and now Hindustan Lever have also been affected. At this rate, the fever may soon spread to other companies including perhaps Lipton which has already gained something like Rs 15 in the last few weeks.

Corporate reports tend to be on the whole satisfactory although profit margins continue to be under pressure. Fertiliser companies have done better than usual, with Zuari Agro leading the pack with a higher gross profit of Rs 19 crore against Rs 4 crore in the previous 18 months. The company is paying a total dividend of 20 per cent against nil in the previous year. Gujarat Fertiliser has also done well with sales up by 12 per cent and gross profits up by 20 per cent. Zuari Agro is diversifying into cement and chemicals and is likely to secure one of the Bombay High-based fertiliser plants to be set up in north India. It is setting up a di-ammonium phosphate plant in Goa. Gujarat Fertiliser is also planning a similar plant in Baroda. Fertiliser companies expect a higher retention price for their products which is one reason for the steady rise in their share prices.

Cyclical Slump: For some reason, barring a few selected scrips, foreign companies are not doing as well as they once did. There was a time when British companies did pretty well but they seem to have fallen on rather lean times, with of course, a few exceptions. In Calcutta, Guest Keen Williams is not what it used to be, nor is the ICI group anywhere near its old mark. The same is the case with Metal Box in Calcutta and Glaxo in Bombay. These things seem to go in cycles, and it is now apparently the turn of Swedish companies. Asea makes electrical equipment in Maharashtra and Karnataka and is expected to double its sales this year, from around Rs 15 crore last year to Rs 29 crore. Nearly all other similar companies, Atlas Copco, Sandvik, Vulcan and so on, are said to be doing extraordinarily well, although Wimco has its own peculiar problems.

One should of course not count one's chickens too soon. The monsoon has been delayed—it was also delayed last year—and there are reports that rain-wise this year may be no different from last year. The Food Ministry is, however, more hopeful and expects a harvest of over 140 million tonnes of foodgrains which at least one government agency, the Planning Commission, has openly criticised as wishful thinking. But the Food Ministry cannot be all that wrong and even if the figure is anywhere near the 140-million-tonne mark, the stock-markets would have something to look forward to.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency		TT Selling Rate (Rs)	TT Buying Rate (Rs)
Australia	1	As $	9.0032	8.8971
Austria	100	As Sch	56.6513	56.0028
Bahrain	1	Dinar	26.6156	26.3661
Bangladesh	100	Taka	41.8413	41.4624
Canada	1	Can $	8.2463	8.1511
Egypt	1	Egp £	12.0000	11.9362
France	1	Fr Frc	1.3298	1.3137
Hong Kong	1	HK $	1.4042	1.3674
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.0639	1.0561
Iran	100	Rial	12.1340	12.0456
Italy	100	It Lira	0.6757	0.6683
Japan	100	Jap Yen	4.2511	4.2061
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.7904	0.7845
Kuwait	1	Dinar	33.6469	33.3909
Malaysia	1	ML $	4.4165	4.3623
Mauritius	1	Rupee	0.9117	0.9050
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.7188	0.7153
Netherlands	1	D Gldr	3.5637	3.5222
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.8063	0.7806
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.8469	4.7873
Spain	100	Sp Pt	7.2155	7.1481
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.4794	0.4745
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.3282	1.3133
Switzerland	1	Sw Frc	4.8197	4.7584
Tanzania	1	T Sch	1.0275	1.0199
Thailand	100	Baht	44.0000	43.0000
UK	1	Pound	15.8907	15.7480
USA	1	US $	10.1100	9.9725
UAE	1	Dihram	4.8697	4.8176
USSR	1	Rouble	14.0553	13.9517
W. Germany	1	DM	4.0006	3.9547

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 6.6.83.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

	Latest	Change on month
PRICES		
ET Commodity Price Index*		
June 2, 1983	262.6	0.9
Cereals	266.6	2.1
Chemicals	357.9	(18.6)
Industrial Fibres	191.5	4.4
Metals	358.2	4.8
Sugar	222.0	5.6
Textile Yarn	218.8	0.6
Vegetable Oils	311.2	3.8
Gold, standard, June 2, 1983 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,875.00	10.00
Silver, .999 June 2 1983 (Rs per kg)	3,665.00	105.00
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index*		
June 2, 1983	270.2	2.2
Cement	267.5	29.0
Chemicals	207.0	11.5
Engineering	496.5	56.1
Fertilisers	206.0	0.5
Man-made Fibres	380.0	24.9
Paper	519.5	45.5
Rubber Goods	179.5	27.9
MONEY		(per cent)
Money Supply, June 4, 1983		2.4
Bank Deposits		1.9
Foreign Exchange Assets		(2.0)

* 1969–70 = 100

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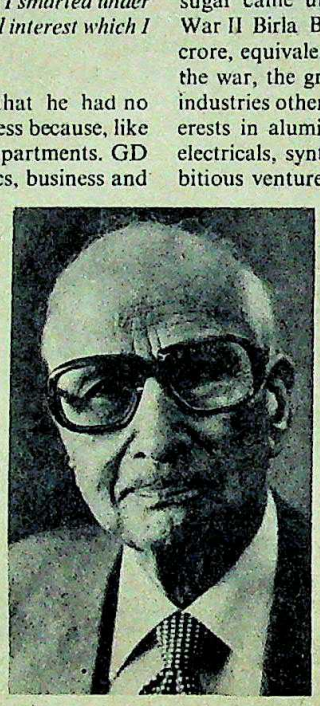
GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA, 1894–1983

Legend In His Lifetime

"When I was 16 (1910) I started an independent business of my own as a broker, and thus began my contact with Englishmen who were my patrons and clients. During my association with them I began to see their superiority in business methods, their organising capacity and many other virtues. But their racial arrogance could not be concealed. I was not allowed to use the lift to their offices, nor their benches while waiting to see them. I smarted under these insults, and this created within me a political interest which I have fully maintained until today."

GHANSHYAMDAS Birla often said that he had no regrets about mixing politics with business because, like a good Hindu, he never thought in compartments. GD was fully involved in everything he did—politics, business and religion—but he remained at heart a nationalist businessman, the last of the titans who, starting virtually from scratch, built a huge industrial empire, worth Rs 1,692 crore at the last count, in less than two generations. In 1910, GD, then only 16, was a small-time broker making the rounds of British business houses in Calcutta's Clive Street. Twenty years later, the man who was not allowed to use the benches of burra sahibs wove in and out of the viceregal house in New Delhi and was a prominent guest at 10 Downing Street, London. He was then only 40, but had his foot firmly on the first rung of the ladder that in another 20 years or so was to take him to the very top.



Modest Businessman: GD rarely talked about his business. "I am not a businessman," he once told INDIA TODAY, feigning surprise that his views on the economy should be of anything but academic interest. "My business runs on auto-pilot," he used to say, "I am only called in to make the big, momentous decision." This was not true, of course. In his bare but elegant office in Bombay, he pored every morning over the telex messages that streamed in from all corners of the country—there is no state where Birlas do not have a factory or office—giving information on the previous day's production, and the messages went back to trembling executives with question marks and crosses in red and blue. GD was a stern autocrat, stern with his family as well as his managers, and unbent only with his great grandchildren.

Both Tatas and Birlas began as cotton and textile brokers, but the former, founded by Jamshedji Tata, were at least a generation ahead of Birlas, whose founder, the grandfather of GD, started his own business in Bombay. There are people in Bombay who still remember 10-year-old Ghanshyamdas running errands for his father before World War I. The room, from which the Birla empire spread all over the country, is still there, surrounded by the usual bustle of handcarts unloading cotton bales and strong boys carrying kettles of spiced tea to cotton brokers crying themselves hoarse in the Mulji Jetha Market.

In 1917, GD, then a partner of Birla Brothers, established the first Indian office for the export of jute in London and followed up with his first jute mill in Calcutta in 1919. This was the first large jute mill owned by Indians and marked Birlas' entry into manufacturing just as Jamshedji Tata's Empress Mills at Nagpur marked Tatas' switch from trading to industry in 1874.

Pioneering Effort: Birlas then set up a cotton textile mill in Delhi in 1920 but the brief post-war boom of 1920-25 was followed by a great depression in 1928 which halted progress for a while. However, Birlas pressed on with three sugar mills when sugar came under a protective tariff. On the eve of World War II Birla Brothers were a fair-sized group with assets of Rs 4 crore, equivalent to about Rs 100 crore at today's prices. After the war, the growth was rapid, and so was diversification into industries other than jute, cotton and sugar. Birlas now have interests in aluminium, fertilisers, cement, heavy machinery and electricals, synthetic fibres and electronics, but their most ambitious venture—a steel plant—never came off.

The initial negotiations for the Durgapur steel plant were started off by Birlas but at the last moment Nehru stepped in and Birlas were left high and dry. GD never forgave Nehru for this and the relations between the two were never quite the same again. The Birla group—there is no such animal, GD said once—employs 300,000 and pays dividend to 250,000 shareholders. Although GD had retired from active business long ago, he remained chairman of Hindustan Aluminium, his favourite company, until the end.

Enduring Relationship: Around 1915, GD acquired a taste for politics and became a Gandhian. It is hard to imagine two people more different than Gandhi and GD but the two seem to have hit it off right from the word go. GD had flirted with terrorism at one time and after getting into serious trouble with the police was forced to go underground for three months. The intervention of some friends saved him from prison. With this unusual background, unusual, that is, for a broker, it was natural that he should be attracted towards Gandhi. GD has said in one his books that what attracted him to the Mahatma was not his economics, which he considers outlandish and unacceptable, but his nationalism and his religious approach to life and its problems. "The result was," GD has written, "that although I did not agree with him on many problems, I never refused to obey his wishes. Our relations became more in the nature of a family attachment, of a father towards a son, which lasted towards the end of his life." Gandhi died in GD's house in Delhi, but GD himself was away in Pilani, Birlas' ancestral village.

GD was the single largest contributor to Gandhi's causes and it has been estimated that the Marwari houses, led of course by GD, contributed something like Rs 20 crore to the Congress—and to Gandhi—until independence. There are people who say that GD exploited the Congress connection to win favoured treatment from the Government, enabling him to consolidate and expand his business, but this is improbable. To have gained such favours, GD would have to deal with Jawaharlal Nehru, a westernised Fabian socialist whose contempt for businessmen, particularly those of the *desi* variety, was well known. In fact, throughout the Nehru regime (1947–64) Tatas were closer to the prime minister and the Government than Birlas who

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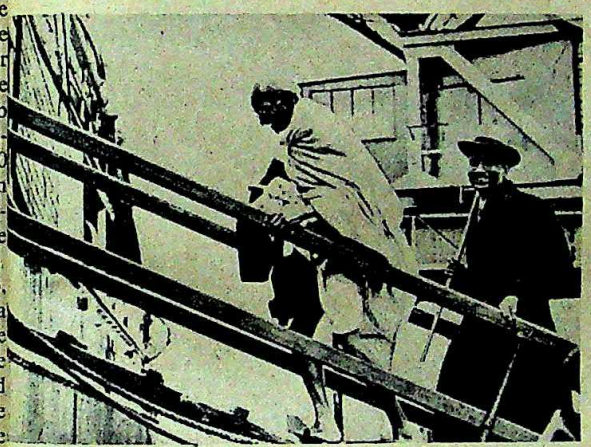
re generally kept at a distance. GD himself was a rare guest at ehru's house.

BUT WITH Gandhi, it was different. In the very first letter —signed, yours sincerely, Mohandas Gandhi—that GD received from Gandhi, he thanks him for Rs 5,000 sent on D's behalf. He also asks him to keep good health for "I want get a lot of work out of you". The correspondence between two is voluminous. It is astonishing how a person with no ckground of politics, in fact, no background of anything ept business, could devote so much time and energy to Gandhi's ndish schemes of khadi and village industries, keep up respondence with the viceroy and his secretaries, deliver long learned speeches in the Central Legislative Assembly on rything from excise duty on cotton piece goods to the price of d in London, find time to establish the Indian Chamber of mmerce in Calcutta and the Federation of Indian Chambers Commerce and Industry in New Delhi, write letters to the *nchester Guardian* on the Round Table Conference and arti- s for the *Eastern Economist* on nutrition, prepare minutes for National Planning Committee, a Congress body headed by



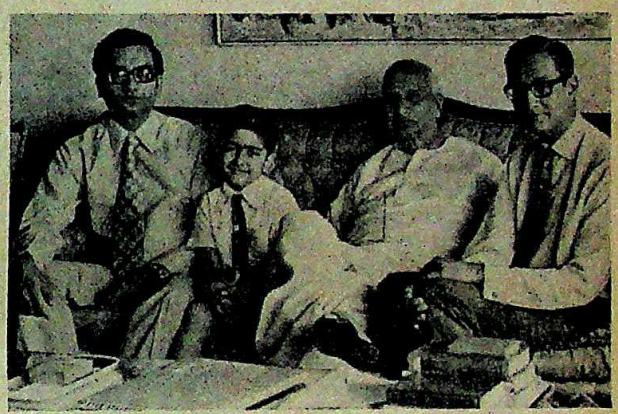
GD with Mahatma Gandhi in London in 1931

hru, draft the Bombay Plan in conjunction with J.R.D. Tata others, quote Emperor Akbar on inflation and good ernment, go over the accounts of Gandhi's numerous trusts ashrams, and warn Britishers, privately as well as in public eches delivered in the central assembly, that freedom freedom alone would solve India's problems.

In a single week in London in 1931, he met Sir Austen amberlain, former secretary of state of India who was offered declined the viceroyalty; the Archbishop of Canterbury; offrey Dawson, editor of *The Times*; Sir Walter Layton, Kingsley Martin, editor of the *New Statesman*; Mr Bone *Manchester Guardian*, and Winston Churchill, who was with- a job and making both ends meet by writing for newspapers. d all this at a time when he was busy setting up new factories expanding old ones, thinking up new projects and opening offices.

Proud Nationalist: GD derived his tremendous energy from fierce nationalism. He was very proud of India and things dian. In 1931, right in the middle of the second Round Table nference, he meets Lord Salisbury who, as the leader of the ries in the House of Lords personified British imperialism at haughtiest. Salisbury tells him, "The great mistake that you dians make is that you are confusing saintliness (he was ferring to Gandhi) and good character with experience. England has got the experience of a thousand years behind her. You have none." GD cannot take it and snaps back, "Our background is far more ancient and creditable than that of England," and almost walks out on Salisbury.

You don't walk out on Lord Salisbury without getting into trouble and GD did get into trouble. And he also got into trouble with the viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, who was not too happy with GD's close connections with the Congress, and refused to give him an appointment. GD was not a Congressman but secretly contributed to its finances. He was thus suspected of having a foot in both camps and the British did not like it, particularly when the Congressmen led by Gandhi were hampering war effort. GD goes to Linlithgow's secretary and tells him, "I am not a Congressman but I am a Gandhi-man. To me Gandhiji is more like a father. I am deeply interested in his constructive work but he has never asked me to join the political war. The viceroy should have known by this time that no man among Indians has worked harder to help him (the viceroy) than myself. And this is how he has reciprocated. If he feels that on the one hand I come to him as a friend and on the other I am secretly acting against him, I have no desire to waste his time any more.



Four generations of Birlas: GD with (from left) grandson Aditya, great grandson Kumarmangalam and son BK

The viceroy has wronged me by suspecting my honesty and I have no desire to allow myself to be snubbed any more." He did not go to the viceroy's house again.

Generous Millionaire: Such tiffs were unusual as GD always preferred adjustment to confrontation with the powers that be. "Businessmen are not revolutionaries," he was fond of saying, though he was not allergic to the latter. (On his return from America, Jayaprakash Narayan had worked as GD's private secretary for a while; JP was a communist then.) But there was something of a Quaker in him and in his approach to business. He has also elaborated:

> As the Gita says, every man must do his duty, which means, if you are a wealthy man, you must do your duty by your wealth. A businessman's *karma* is to amass wealth and his *dharma* is to provide for general welfare. If political action is involved in this, I don't see why I should fight shy of it.

GD was something of a yogi and a commissar, a man who believed in private enterprise but also drew up India's first national plan for development, a careful businessman who imported the latest technology from abroad, but also built the most exquisite marble temples and donated them to universities and towns. It has been a long journey from Pilani in Rajasthan to Regents Park in London where he collapsed last week and died, like a true karmayogi, in harness.

—JAY DUBASHI

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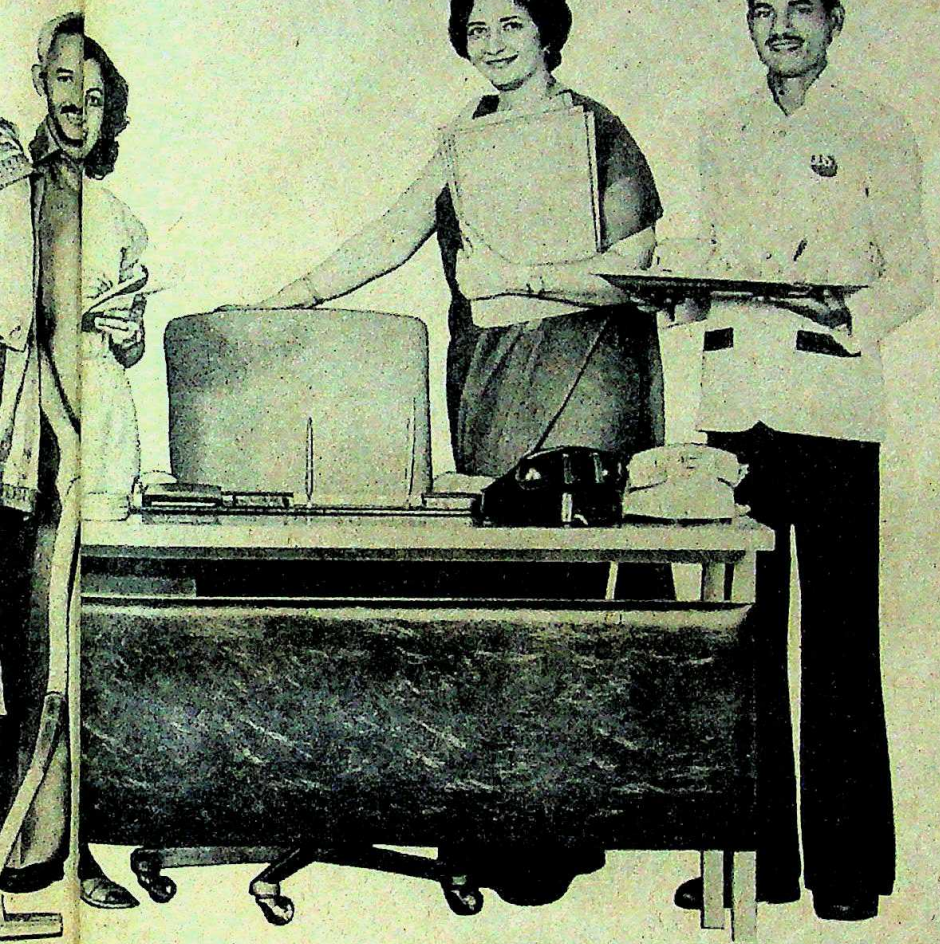

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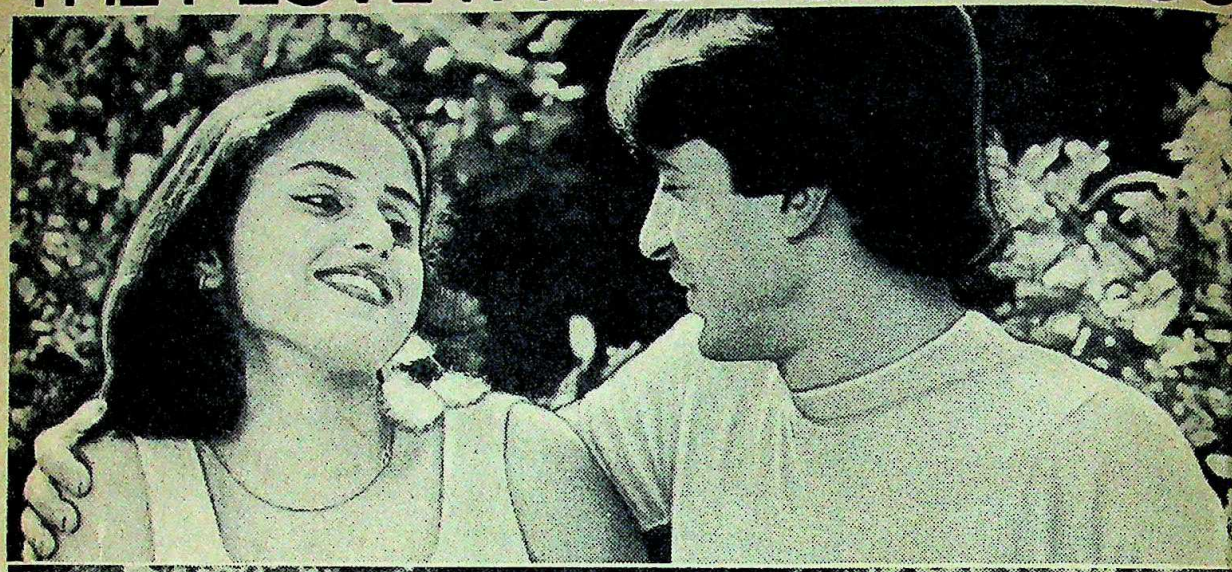

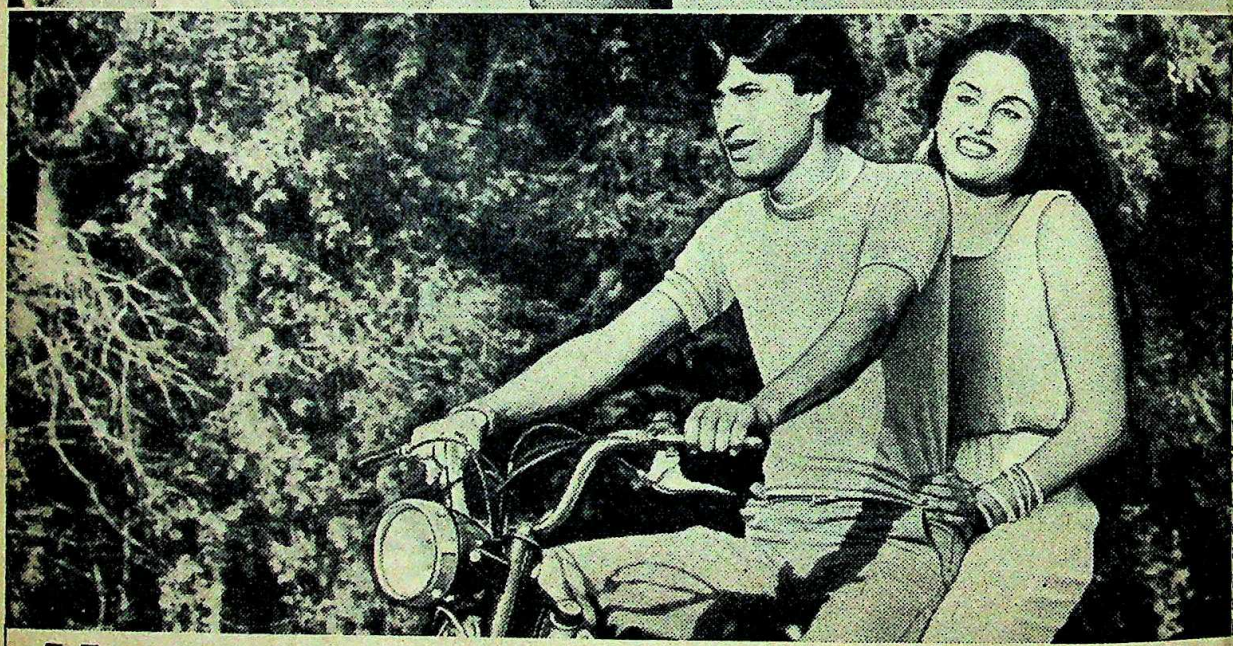

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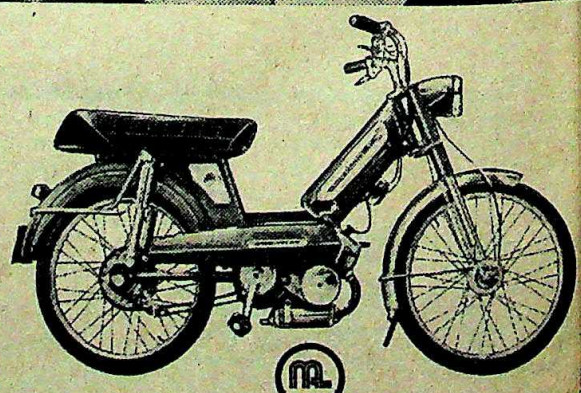

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TT COLEMAN

ressing Problems

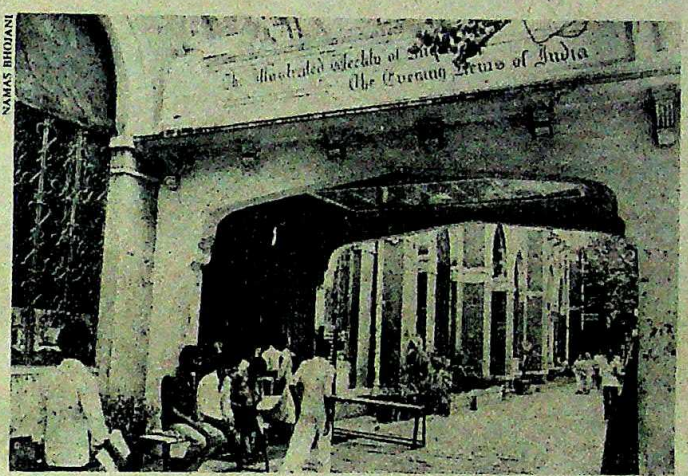
HE 'Old Lady of Bori Bunder', all of 145 years old, was displaying all the signs of advancing age last fortnight. g June 5, *The Illustrated Weekly of* nd *Dharamyug*, two major publica- f Bennett, Coleman & Co Ltd—better as the publishers of *The Times of* newspaper—suspended publication ndefinite period. Although other ma- of the group continue to be printed side presses, schedules are erratic. he entry of Gulab Joshi Kamgar Utkarsh Sabha e group's unions, shoul- aside R.J. Mehta and his ai Mazdoor Sabha, trouble erupted in one after another: today, vure machine and bind- ions have closed down. oup has also applied to ently shut down the department.

e management is taking stand. Accusing Joshi nce and intimidation of taffers and of bringing ders, Dr Ram S. Tar- anaging director, Ben- oleman, has called for protection at the buil- ntrance. Says he: "There are clear laws which should be conformed to. vent of any grievance, the remedy lies court. We will not be browbeaten by and coercion."

amant Stands: Joshi, for his part, is ed by what he says is the manage- attempts to slur his character by re- g false cases of violence against his , including his son, and regularly e *The Times of India* to publicise Joshi wrote to Editor Girilal Jain for space to counter the allegations e Jain declined, he plans to go to the Council to complain. Says Joshi: e who knows my history will be hat I adopt a very constructive ap- and avoid strikes." He points out Golden Tobacco where he started his ork, he has been able to ensure heavy reases without any strike.

e crisis should be familiar to the officers. In 1980, the newspaper and es closed down for around three because of union trouble which nded in Mehta's ousting S.Y. Kol- union, which had been in control ars. This time round, a section of the was disgruntled over the manage- ment's move to crack down on overtime—a- mounting at times to as much as Rs 500 a month—and shopped around for another leader. Datta Samant and Kolhatkar refu- sed. Joshi was only too happy to oblige. Joshi is relatively new to the union world. A staunch Indira Gandhi loyalist, his union ac- tivities started in 1975 and now claims to have between 150 and 200 units under his control.

Growing Malaise: The current labour crisis is symbolic of the malaise that has the venerable press organisation in its grip. While *The Times of India* and other dailies are going strong—*The Times of India*'s circula- tion in Bombay is an unparalleled 2,79,182—the magazines' circulation figures have dropped from the heyday of 1975–77, the Emergency period. *The Illustrated Weekly*, for instance, which sold 3,34,524 copies per issue in 1977–78 was down to 1,70,643 by the end of last year and others—*Dharamyug*, *Femina*, *Filmfare*—have dropped substant- ial chunks of circulation. They have lost out to more modern newcomers, *The Illustrated Weekly* to *Sunday* and other newsmagazines, *Filmfare* to *Stardust*. In fact, the group's newspapers boast of sales figures almost—



The Times of India building in Bombay, Joshi (left) and Nandy

three times the periodicals' and advertising revenue eight times as high.

The group's revenue and turnover figures for the past three years show an increase because the management has periodically hiked subscription and advertisement rates. This can do little to arrest the inner sickness which has provoked journalists to leave the group—something unheard of a few years ago—and make good elsewhere: M.J. Akbar of *Sunday* is the best example. The first sign that the management was yielding to pressures for change came in the shape of Pritish Nandy, 35, appointed director, publications, by group Chairman Ashok Jain. A poet and one-time director of public relations, Nandy admits: "The future happened on us. Newer magazines have shown imagination, skill and sensitivity to public readership. We believed what was successful in the past will continue to be so."

Nandy's appointment has not been welcomed by all. Said a magazine editor: "Who is Nandy to tell us to change? We ourselves have been screaming for the need to change for years. Everyone talks of modernizing the magazine but I can't change the page size, the print size, the types given to me or the niggardly sums sanctioned for contributions." Adds Vimla Patil, *Femina* editor: "The yardstick of modernization may differ from person to person. The truth is always in fashion." Many editors feel the newer competition goes for style rather than substance.

Bad Planning: But there is no doubt that the nuts and bolts of the set-up could do with some oiling. The gestation period of a magazine is normally seven weeks. Each magazine has to queue up long weeks for its turn to print. Colour pages have to be sent four weeks in advance. Employees complain of penny-pinching attitudes and a glaring lack of planning. The prime example is the 12 acres of land the group has lying vacant acquired in Kandivili, 35 km from the city centre. It cannot start building there for at least another year because it has not obtained permission. But, the photogravure machinery has already arrived, and is lying idle.

Some say that the group's present troubles really stem from the 14-year period from 1962 when government and court-appointed directors effectively kept the Jains—who took the company over from Seth Ram Krishna Dalmia in 1956—in a minority. During 11 of the 14 years, not a single new machine was bought. The 'old lady' appears to be paying for sins of the past.

—COOMI KAPOOR

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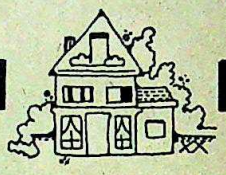

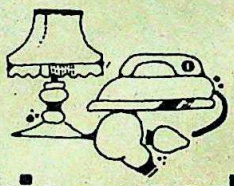

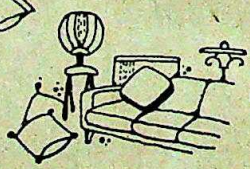

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AUCTIONS

What Price Indian Art?

AUCTION houses in London and New York have recently come up with some answers to the oft-asked question—what is Indian art worth? Winter sales organised recently by the three big international art dealers, Sotheby's, Christie's and Phillips together realised about Rs 2 crore and proved conclusively that interest in Indian art, at least in London and New York, is alive and well.

A Mathura Goddess, 10th-12th century, the most sensuous Indian sculpture at Sotheby's sold for Rs 82,500. A 1570 Mughal miniature, an illustration for the *Hamza Nama* —belonging once to Akbar's own copy of *Dastan-i-Amir Hamza*—brought in Rs 2.20 lakh. Phillips in its sale—held to a standing room only audience —realised Rs 9 lakh. And at Christie's, a 15th century Nepalese gilt copper figure of Durga went for Rs 7.15 lakh—that is, Rs 4.6 lakh more than what Christie's had estimated the figure to be actually worth. Said Andrew Kahane, Christie's expert on Indian art: "The high prices achieved indicates that there is solid interest for important pieces of this area."

Renewed Interest: Various reasons have spurred interest in Indian, Himalayan and South-east Asian art—and for the feverish bidding it invites at auctions. One reason, of course, is that a lot of famous pieces have only been recently released on the commercial market. Descendants of British collectors have begun to sell at auctions. The affluent Iranians who left their country when the Shah fell have also turned to auction houses to liquidate some of their assets.

Further, awareness and acquisition of Indian art continues to grow in the US as Americans are exposed to new areas of Indian art. Gandhara sculpture, for instance, is always a sure sell, aided as it is by art shows, books and scholars who have focussed much attention on this school that synthesises the Greco-Roman and Maurya-Gupta plastic traditions in sculpture. Similarly, the surge of interest in Tibetan and Nepalese art can be explained by three major exhibitions on Himalayan culture that were held in 1982-83.

Sotheby's eastern auction and (clockwise from top left): enamelled cup and saucer, Nepalese gilt copper Durga, Kushan sandstone frieze, sandstone goddess

Yet another reason offered for the heated bidding was Phillips's move into a new, untapped residential area, away from the fashionable art galleries of Madison Avenue. Said Cintra H. Huber, vice-president of Phillips in New York: have new clients from th trict augmenting our est ed dealers-collectors clie

Yet there is a che about how and why art and manuscripts are re at auctions. While an Koran at Sotheby's in L fetched the highest price 1.49 lakh—a two-volume nate Koran dated 14t century, failed to sell, des rarity, in New York. Dea tempt to explain this as a ged Muslim image beca OPEC, the oil cartel, and meini.

Resilient Market: other hand, ivory works, hara sculpture, Oriental tures, Tibetan bronze Rajput and Islamic pa continue to keep the cas ter ringing. "For Pahari ings there is a tremend mand," said Michael Jon theby's expert on Indian tures, "but there are few of high quality." A 1749 ing of a princess bathing Bikaner, sold for Rs 31, 12th century Chola bro Balakrishna fetched R lakh while a head of Bo va from 2nd century Ga went for Rs 41,250. B art, especially the ima Buddha are very well received by Ame And Indian miniature sales in Amer according to an enthusiastic British neer, "simply...missionary work."

What, then, is Indian art worth winter sale alone, Christie's of Londo sed Rs 10.5 lakh selling 68 per cent of displayed. Sotheby's of New York over Rs 1.02 crore over two spe winter sales of Indian art. And Chris New York made Rs 2.83 crore (Rs 8 being realised by the Pan Asian colle

While the four very successfu prove the resilience of the art market, ness of Indian art in America has still way to go. Americans prefer simplicity complex Indian iconography is a seri terrent," lamented one well-known while another felt sure that "Indian s re is bound to develop". Similarl market for Indian sculpture is highly s lised, and in America, a rather limite But when the art is superb, the market lish. Even during hard economic ti these, the best works of art continue t eyebrows—and hands—at auctions.

—SHEHBAZ H. SAFRANI in Ne

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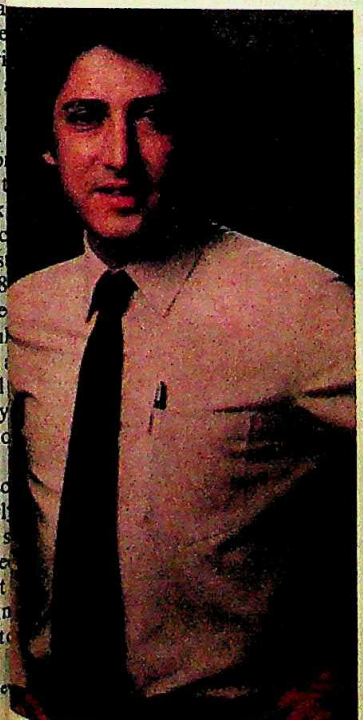

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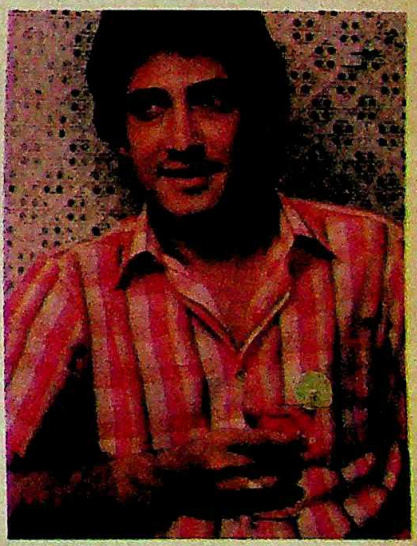

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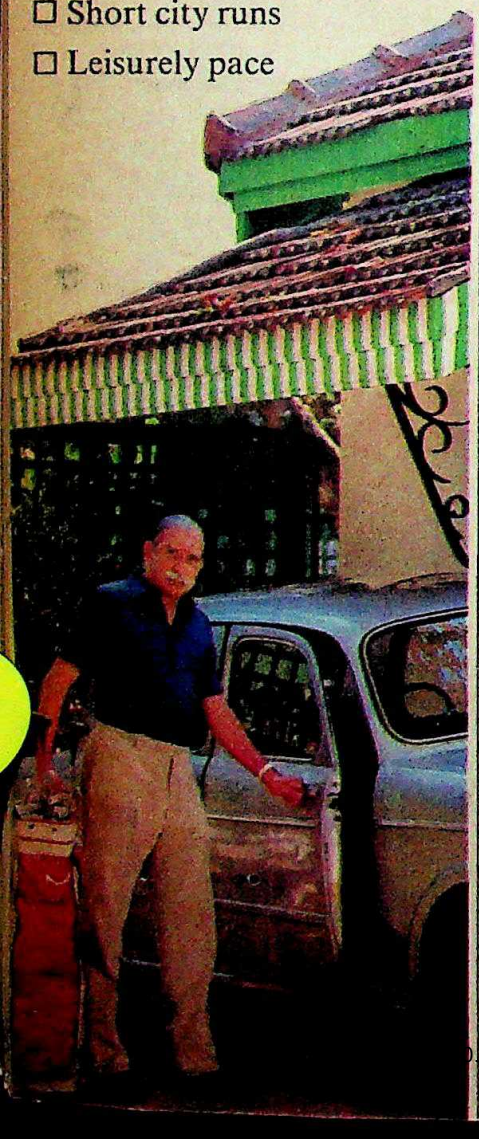

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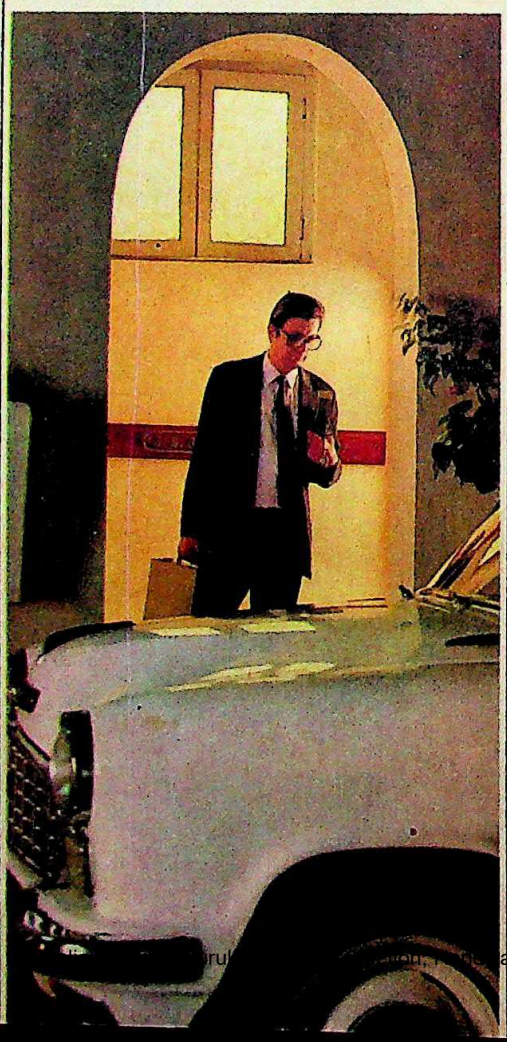

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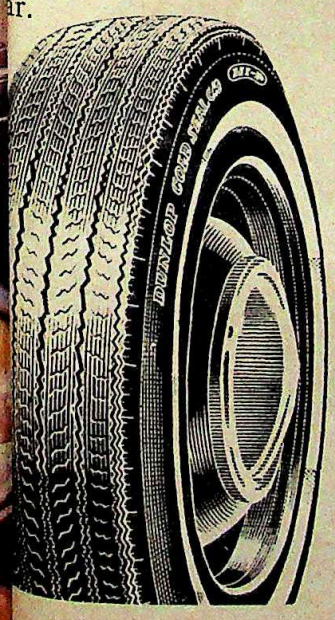

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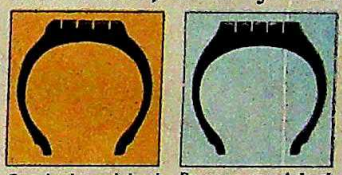

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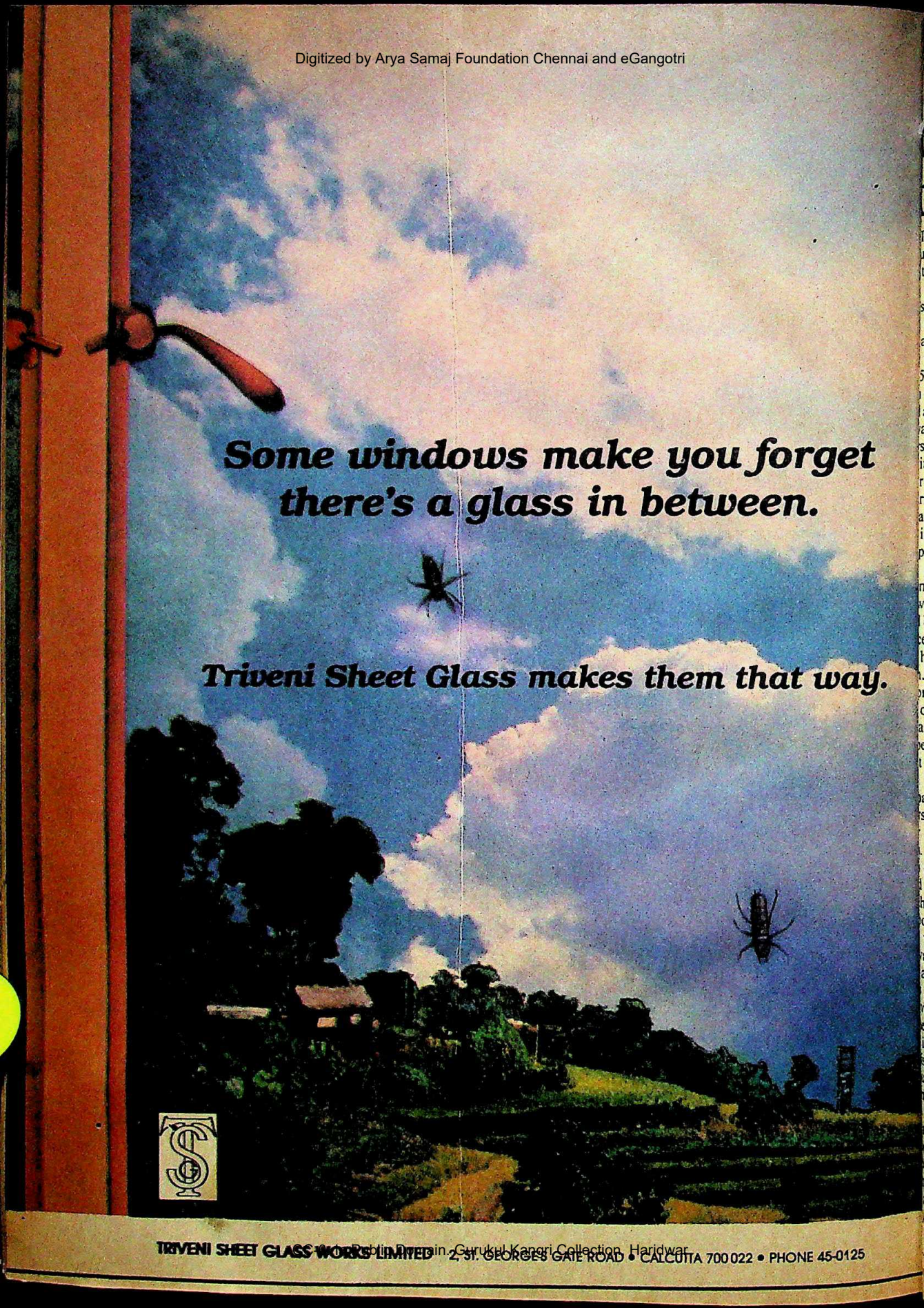

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GARH MUSEUM

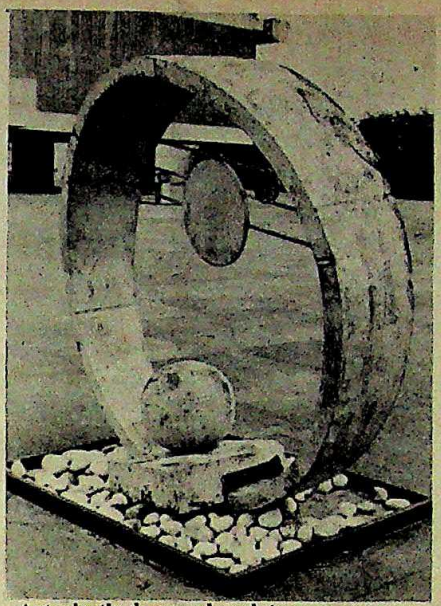
ouse Of rrors

TARJEET Singh's precious sculpure lies mouldering in one corner of the open yard. Bal Krishan Guru two of his nationally recognised s. And last fortnight, when a chest of was forced open, three contribuartists Krishan Ahuja, Lalita Lajmi were found casually stuffed into it. 5 short years since the Chandigarh opened its magnificent doors, it has a new record in damaging works of astage" considered high even by its rs.

imes, works of art invited for exhire either damaged beyond repair or rned at all. Contributions to the aphic exhibitions were rolled up and in a corner of the office room for pite written requests by the artists return. In another case, after reminders, Paris-based artist Vishwawas returned his paintings—in a bunch. In disgust he sent the offencel back to the authorities, having his paintings and received no com-. Said Museum Director Jagmora: "It is the headache of the artists or not have an insurance cover amage or loss to their work. We do ensate for any loss. We make it t the risk of damage or loss is

arable Harm: Earlier, within s of its inception, the museum a hundred Kangra miniature . The thieves, evidently con- of art, mailed back, through a parcel, nearly half the paintth they thought were useless. The olice were unable to trace, desvigorous efforts of Dr M.S. a, "the body and soul" of the and the one who collected the from obscure corners of the valley. "Untraced" was scratched file of the missing paintings and into one corner. Said artist Prem sgustedly: "Some of these now iseums in the West."

now, stealing valuable works of problem, admits assistant curator Paul. While the armed police s keep a round-the-clock vigil outilding, inside the galleries the staff ssips or merely dozes off. Both and the curator D.N. Singh admit and the neglect due to the lack of a



Avtarjeet's damaged sculpture: unconcern

properly trained staff. "But what can I do?" asks Singh. "There are no defined duties."

What is even more annoying to the artists is the ease with which the Chandigarh administration calls for works of art to hastily decorate a government rest house for visiting VIPs. While some of the paintings get damaged, others just disappear. Moreover, the lending out is done without insurance. A while ago, the museum had lent works of famed artist Richard Roerich to the Trade Authority of India for an exhibition in

A miniature from the museum's collection

Moscow. Two of them were damaged and the insurance money is yet to be recovered.

Shady Acquisitions: Like all good museums, the Chandigarh Museum, too, claims a varied collection of works of art, now numbering over 7,000. Recently a numismatic section has also been added to inspire the study of coins and medals. While the purchase committee, chaired by the Chandigarh chief commissioner, includes eminent artists like B.C. Sanyal, Richard Bartholomew, Shiv Ram Murti, Dr B.K. Goswami and Dr Randhawa, local artists continue to be sceptical of the way art works are purchased. Sometimes poor copies are bought and often favours are bestowed. An artist's non-artist wife could have her first work purchased by the museum. Similarly a poor imitation of Chintmanikar's famous sculpture is proudly displayed outside the entrance. Chopra, however, insists that in purchasing a piece of art, only merit counts.

The Chandigarh Museum is perhaps the only museum of its standing which has no laboratory facilities for the preservation, conservation and restoration of art works. Says Chopra: "But for funds, we would have loved to have this facility. We do not like running to Lucknow and other places to save these works from the vagaries of nature." And for funds, the museum survives on the moody charity of bureaucrats or the College of Arts. It has no direct budget and is fed crumbs from a total allocation of Rs 11 lakh marked for the sixth plan. The result is that out of the total collection of oil paintings, only 10 per cent are in an even tolerable condition. Moreover, the museum does not have a trained museologist. And so shaky are the preservation facilities, that a recent hailstorm is said to have damaged not only the crops, but also a few paintings.

Indifference: The artists are further cramped by a lack of space. Out of the 823 Gandhara sculptures at the museum—India's largest collection—only 228 are on display. The remaining "rest in peace" in dingy, dusty stores. Says Randhawa: "We are often forced to hold exhibitions in the stores." The Museum of Science also suffers from a similar neglect due to lack of funds, confirms its head, Usha Gupta. Several artists feel that, as the administration is already spending Rs 4 crore on the annual upkeep of the museum, it could very well lend a helping hand to pull it out of the present mess.

Staff quarrels have allowed the museum to remain headless. The director's chair has been vacant right from its inception. The Union Public Service Commission finally selected Singh, the present curator, some months ago, but the administration has so far refused to confirm him. Says Singh defensively: "I do not know why suddenly everyone has turned against me." Between the complaints and the counter-complaints, says Chopra in disgust, you cannot get even a peon to do his duty.

Only one, rather shaky feather, remains in the museum's cap—the regular exhibitions of photographs, paintings and graphics that Ramnath Pasricha, well-known painter of Himalayan landscapes, insists "certainly introduce art to the people". But at what cost only the artists know.

—GOBIND THUKRAL with BALVINDER

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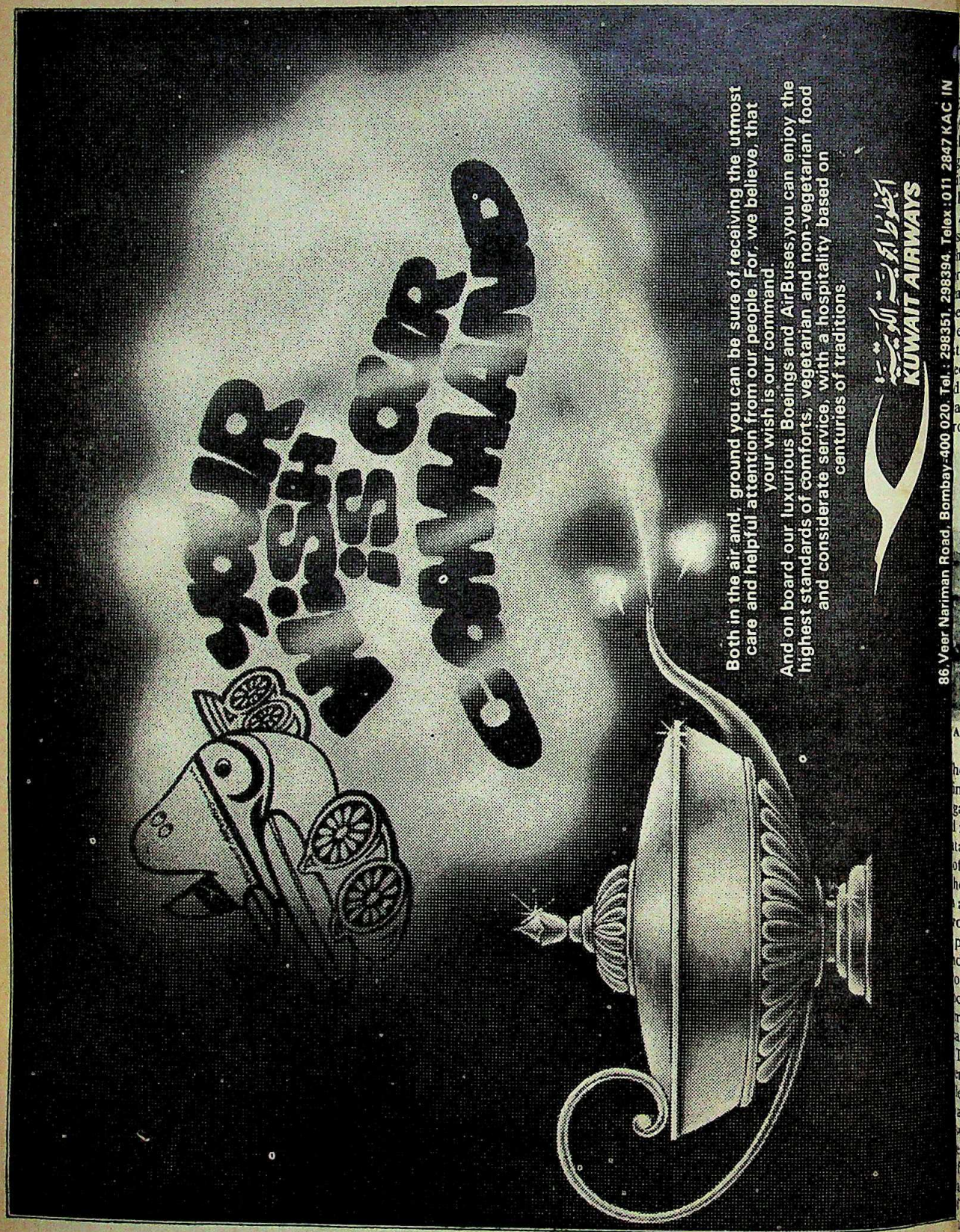

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ABAD

ture Shock

OSCIENTISTS are finding Wide Angled Reflections (WAR) from hockwaves triggered by explosions ground and bounced back from the interior a fascinating tool to probe h's crust all the way down to the After a decade of WAR operations, s at the National Geophysical h Institute (NGRI), Hyderabad, can redict from the seismic signatures as where coal, oil or gas could be elow the surface. The technique is eep Seismic Sounding (DSS).

t fortnight, when the NGRI team ed the study of the Mahanadi delta d returned to Hyderabad, Project ator Krishan Lal Kaila exclaimed: rospects of finding oil there are

AR explosion: sound technique

he technique has opened up possibi- nding new reserves of coal, oil and gas concealed under the Deccan l in sedimentary basins. The wealth ta can provide the most interesting of the resources under our feet and he future help solve long-standing about the evolution of the earth."

or Image: The WAR exercise is sim- points, 20 m to 30 m deep, are filled dles of gelatine sticks varying in om 50 kg to 150 kg. The explosion ck waves which bounce back from major boundary below the earth's alled the Mohorovic discontinuity This boundary between the upper- r of the earth's crust and the next ed the mantle, is a good reflector of aves. The angle and strength of the wave depend on the angle at which nt wave strikes the boundary, its from the surface, the travel time ve and the physico-chemical pro- the boundary or any other layer trikes.

The shot points are triggered off simultaneously in set patterns and the returning waves are recorded by geophones, essentially electro-mechanical sensors, on the surface; these convert them into electrical signals and send them to the recording van. Says Kaila: "We use two 30-channel mobile seismic recording stations connected to the geophones kept 200 m apart. With this we cover 12 km at a stretch and covering the entire length of the profile, usually about 250 km, takes about five months. We have to work by night so that the sound waves are not distorted by other disturbances."

The wavy seismic signatures are stored on photographic paper and magnetic tapes and processed by computer. NGRI scientists have developed three methods for processing and interpreting the data. Explains Kaila: "Seismicity maps can be prepared and the structure of the upper mantle can also be studied. The thickness of mineral-bearing sediments and other earth resources can be indicated with further improvements in the methods of interpretation and analysis of the shock waves. The Oil and Natural Gas Commission and Oil India Limited have commissioned us to deploy the DSS technique."

Widespread Searches: In all about 3,000 km of DSS profiles have been tracked in the country since 1973 when the NGRI took up the experiment in collaboration with the Institute of Geophysics, Kiev, USSR the pioneers of the technique. Apart from searching for coal- and oil-bearing areas. Indian scientists have used DSS to uncover the potential seismicity in the Koyna dam area in Maharashtra and the geological evolution of the Himalayas in the north and the Cuddapah basin in the south. Emphasised Kaila: "The immediate interest is in finding reserves of coal, oil and natural gas. DSS studies suggest exploration for oil or natural gas in the Srinagar valley for it has been found below limestone of about the same age and type in the North Sea. The chances of finding coal below the Deccan traps over 10,000 sq km in the Ujjain-Nepanagar area are also bright."

It will be some years before the WAR data is fully understood. But it is expected to shed new light on the geology of the deep crust. It is already providing information on crustal composition over very large areas including those in which bedrock is poorly exposed. It will help select the most promising areas for mineral exploration. Says Hari Narain, former NGRI director and now coordinator of a UNDP-funded International Exploratory Methods Project: "We are yet to reach the stage when we can pinpoint specific resources from the DSS data but can suggest large regions that have good potential. Geoscientists have their work cut out for them: DSS data will keep us busy for many years to come."

— AMARNATH K. MENON

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ne Eternal Embrace

NA: THE DIVINE LOVER
lications, 1983
Rs 440; Pages: 216

IN THE incredibly rich Hindu pantheon, peopled with innumerable images of the Supreme Godhead in a thousand different forms, none is so fascinating as Krishna, the Eternal Flutist, ne Lover. From his dramatic birth at night hour in the dungeons ncle Kansa, king of Mathuis final departure in the near Dwarika, Krishna's fe is full of miraculous and ous occurrences, many of ve become an integral part ultural tradition.

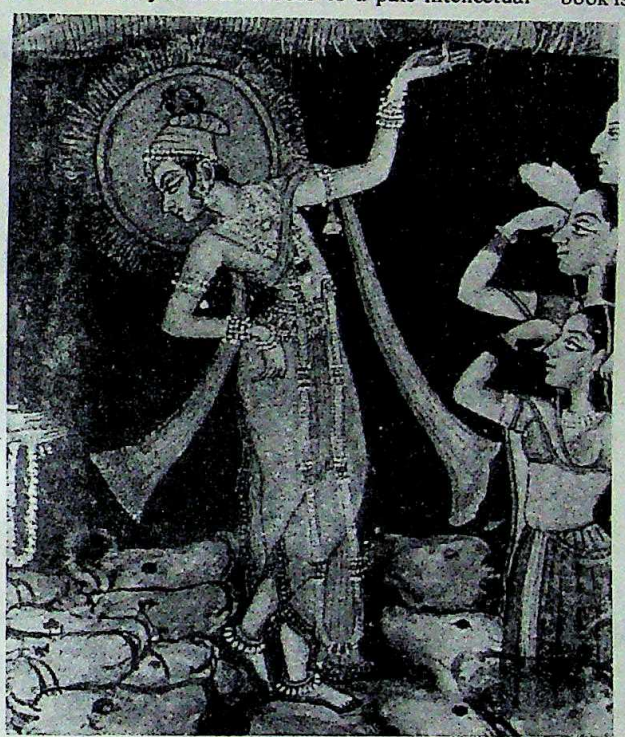
childhood pranks among erds in Gokula, his andro- beauty as a splendid youth ivan surroundings of Vrinis dalliance with the gopis entures with the gopas are lised in myth and drama, d music, in the festivals of d Janmashtami, in the nd hearts of half a billion in India and abroad.

later role as the great pre- f the Pandavas in their r justice, culminating in battle of the Mahabharata kshetra where he delivered iling Ariuna the immortal s of the Song Celestial— gavad Gita—places him he greatest religious figu- he history of mankind. ped by millions as God e, the story of Krishna a source of rich artistic on down through the in recent times has number of scholarly tic volumes in many s.

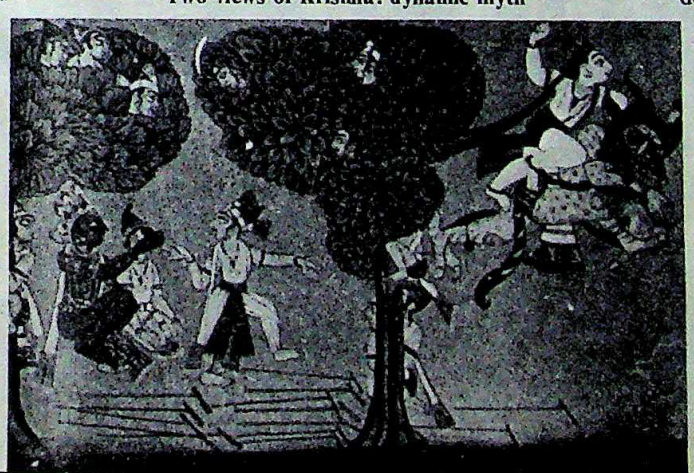
ghtful Volume: A wel- d impressive addition erature on the Krishna the beautifully produ- *na: The Divine Lover.* re few objects more le than a well-printed tractively illustrated and this handsome volume has evidently been produced with great care and devotion. The text consists of seven extended essays by various authorities in the field of art criticism, including three Indians who are well known—Dr K.J. Khandalawala, Dr Kapila Vatsyayan and Dr B.N. Goswami. They cover a broad spectrum of artistic forms depicting various episodes in the life of Krishna. Taken together, they represent a comprehensive survey of his amazing life spanning a full hundred years. The articles on the impact of the Krishna legend on dance and ritual are particularly interesting, because, for the Hindus, God has not yet been reduced to a pale intellectual abstraction but is a living, vibrant, dynamic reality.

The excellent reproductions in the book add greatly to its value. A wide selection has been made from numerous sources, including of course the well-known Rajasthani, Gujarati and Pahari paintings, but also from such lesser known ones as an 18th century wall painting in Mattanchery and a 17th century Orissa bronze. The pictures cover the entire gamut of Krishna's life, from a baby sucking his toe to the great *vishwarupa* form embracing the entire cosmos "as if thousand suns had risen simultaneously in the sky".

A carefully prepared glossary reveals the meticulous effort that has gone into the production of this handsome volume. While the price is high by Indian standards, the book is in fact an excellent buy because it is a valuable compendium of artistic and intellectual information about an endlessly fascinating personality, lovably human yet palpably divine.



Two views of Krishna: dynamic myth



Undimmed Radiance: Playmate and friend, lover and philosopher—Krishna's radiance shines undimmed down through the long, dark corridors of time. To read this book is to be once more aware of the timeless and unquenchable vitality of the Hindu tradition. Even as we near the end of this terrible 20th century, so full of mass murder and unprecedented destruction, the figure of Krishna beckons us to renewed faith, to a participation in the *dharmayuddha*, the eternal battle for righteousness, which will continue as long as humanity itself survives on this planet.

Krishna's flute still plays, if only we have ears to hear; his voice still reverberates through the battlefield of our inner being, if only we have the wisdom to be still for a moment and listen to its message.

The Divine Lover has been well described by Sri Aurobindo:

"The master of man and his infinite lover,
He is close to our hearts had we vision to see.
We are lost in the pride and the pomp and our passion,
We are bound in our thoughts where we hold ourselves free.
It is he in the sun who is ageless and deathless,
And into the midnight his shadow is thrown.
When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,
He was seated within it, immense and alone."—DR.KARAN SINGH

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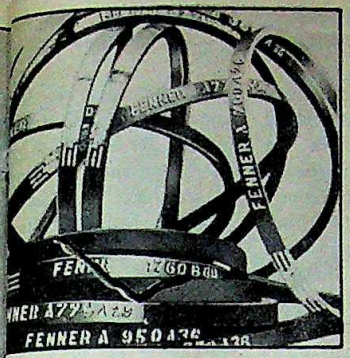

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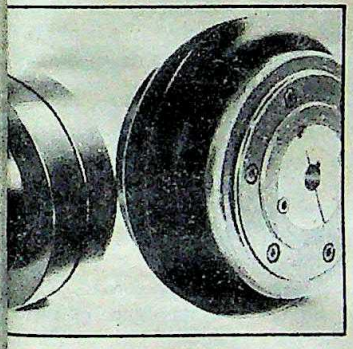

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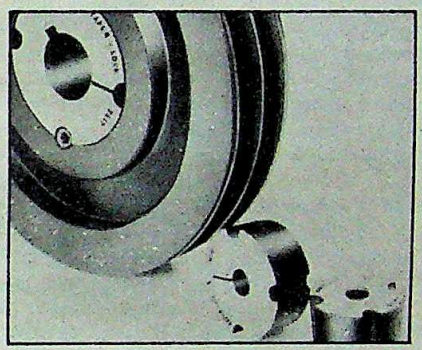

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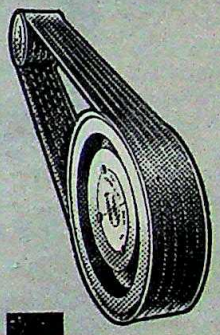

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■ The formidable duo of Mangeshkar and Bhonsle better look to their defences. Their seeming permanent monopoly on the film music scene is being increasingly challenged and by the unlikeliest of upstarts—movie stars. It started with Raakhee who warbled a song in *Taaqat*. Smita Patil followed up with a passable number in *Raavan* and last fortnight, **Rekha** completed the hat trick by recording a song for her forthcoming film, *Agar Hum*

Rekha at the recording: collecting bouquets

Na Hote. The star obviously takes her singing seriously. She turned up at Bombay's Film Centre where she was recording the duet with Shailendra Singh, sans make-up, her hair tied up in an unruly knot. In the studio, she performed like she had been doing it all her life, finishing the recording in just two takes and earning grudging applause even from music maestro R.D. Burman. Move over Mangeshkar.

■ As heir apparent to one of India's most powerful Hindu mutts—the famous Kancheepuram Sankara Mutt—**Sankaranarayan** will have to renounce all worldly pleasures and ready himself for the ascetic life of a *sanyasi*. Except he doesn't have much of a worldly life to renounce. The designate is barely 14 years old and is one of the youngest to have been afforded this religious distinction. However, he

Sankaranarayan: new life

will have to go through a rigorous seven-year training period before he assumes leadership of the mutt. Meanwhile family and friends are taboo. His four brothers, three sisters and father are permitted to visit him occasionally, but his mother is only allowed to gaze upon him from a stipulated distance.

■ **Narasimhan Parthasarthi**, 28, will do anything for kicks—even succumb willingly to scorpion bites. Last fortnight

Parthasarthi: snakes alive

before an incredulous audience in Delhi, the Coimbatore-based daredevil appeared with an army of poisonous scorpions marching all over him. Coolly picking off one that had bit him, he sucked out the poison and with a mock grimace announced: "It's a little salty." Scorpions, however, are chicken feed for Parthasarthi. He has spent much of last year cooped up in a cage with 100 cobras, 75 kraits, 75 vipers and an assortment of other dangerous reptiles. He only switched to scorpions when the Tamil Nadu Government banned the act. Says he nonchalantly, "I've always wanted to do something I'd be remembered for." Snakes alive!

■ The song and dance over singer **Usha Uthup**'s song and dance is assuming ridiculous proportions. The West Bengal Government's ebullient Public Works Minister **Jatin Chakraborty** started the ball rolling by declaring that Uthup would be banned from singing in state-run auditoriums. His objections: Uthup was promoting a decadent culture; it was a slight on Bengal's cultural tradition and the singer, he said, swayed her hips in "an obscene manner". What made the affair laughable was that Uthup is probably the least sexy pop singer on the music scene and resembles a well-fed housewife, even on stage. She also has a good memory. Recalling fact that Chakraborty had invited her to sing at one public meetings, Uthup in by stating: "If he did not sider it vulgar then, how l suddenly acquired that c ction?" Uthup doesn't int let it rest there. She ha reatened to take the mat the courts and sue Chakra for defamation. Which jus to show that there is than one way to bell a M cat.

SIGN POSTS

■ **Awarded:** Dr A.S. P the director of the Patel Institute of Delhi, the Jawaharlal Nehru Na Award for Science. The lakh award has been giv the Madhya Pradesh vernment for Dr Paintal's in the field of cardiova physiology.

■ **Honoured:** S. Kr swamy, head of Asia's gest private documentary short films organisation honorary degree of d of philosophy by the Colt Pacific University, US. *Indus Valley to Indira G* his four-hour colour docu tary on Indian history culture.

■ **Appointed:** The f commissioner of Delhi P Bajrang Lal, as the insp general of the C Industrial Security Force.

Uthup on stage: song and dance

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